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A. M. Rieke

MISTRESS BEATRICE COPE.

VOL. II.

MISTRESS

BEATRICE COPE

OR

PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF A JACOBITE'S DAUGHTER

BY

M. E. LE CLERC

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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MISTRESS BEATRICE COPE.

CHAPTER I.

BEATRICE COPE once more met her brother by the Forester's Ash; but, ere she did so, Mr. Sandiland had given him information concerning her prospects which would have come best from her own lips. Roger Sandiland made this communication in ignorance, assuming that Beatrice, during their first conversation, must have told

her brother of her position with regard to Sir Raymond Forrest of Drumscour.

Beatrice, however, had not spoken on the subject; and she now found herself forestalled in a way she little liked.

She noticed a difference in Charles' manner, even in their greetings—a restraint and coldness which had not been apparent before; and, when he began to question her, a hurt tone of offence was manifest, although he spoke very courteously.

'Beatrice,' he said, as they sat side by side beneath the gloomy ash-tree, 'what is this that Roger Sandiland tells me? He says that you are formally betrothed to young Forrest of Drumscour. Truly my venerated uncle takes much upon himself,

in these days of misrule! But,' he added, checking himself with the somewhat sarcastic smile which Beatrice had noticed once or twice before, 'I forgot that I am a dead man; and dead men have no rights. Nevertheless, Beatrice, since to you I live, I must pray you to tell me, has there been undue pressure on the part of the Hunter family, with regard to this proposed marriage? Your heart, I imagine, can scarce be engaged.'

'There has been no pressure,' Beatrice said; and she spoke resolutely, though her fingers toyed nervously with the ribbons that garnished the shady hat which she had taken off and laid upon her lap. 'I have made my free choice. And I hope to be a happy woman. He is a good, true

gentleman; and what are politics, that they should part him and me?'

'You know not of what you speak,' her brother said, impatiently. 'You have seen naught of the world, and can scarce imagine the fair chances which the future holds for you. There is no date fixed for this preposterous marriage, I presume?'

'Yes,' replied Beatrice, distressed but firm. 'When the Christmas season is over —at the coming in of the year—we hope —we intend——'

'The matter need not be discussed between us on the instant,' he answered briefly, waving her words aside. 'A few weeks hence we may approach this question from a different standpoint. Sweet mouse,' he said, changing his tone to one

of tenderness at which his sister's heart thrilled, 'you little know what castles in the air I have built for you! And now you must pardon some seeming impatience, for to find you already pledged to a country bumpkin of these parts is enough to fret a calmer spirit than mine. You are very young, however; and this is my uncle's doing. Such bonds are easily broken—could I but show myself!'

Beatrice turned her large eyes upon him, with endless supplication in their depths.

'I do not wish to be free,' she said.

Charles Cope laughed to himself: the very spirit of gentle and polite banter danced around his lips.

'That was well done!' he exclaimed.

'You would make a charming actress, Beatrice, did you but play the rôle of the faithful heroine upon the boards. That speech, and that look, would bring down the house. Unfortunately, the sublime and the ridiculous are ever close together, and I have met this swain of yours, as it chances; I know somewhat of your north-country paragon, wherefore the situation is robbed of its romance. 'Twas in London that the privilege of his acquaintance was vouchsafed me, when I passed among men as Lester Blundell, a gay young spark about town, without a care in the world save to extract the most amusement and the least profit from the twenty-four hours of each day and night. Well, your friend Sir Raymond was plain Mr. Forrest then,

and a sufficiently ill-polished specimen of the country gentry. He brought his country manners to town; and took upon him to disapprove the ways of his elders and betters. They could afford to disregard his insolence; I, as a young man of his own standing, crossed swords with him once . . . . 'Twas some trifle upon which we quarrelled; I do not well remember what . . . I have had many such affairs; and the details of this one have escaped me, saving that my opponent had power to put me into a towering passion.—Do not look pale upon it, silly child; there was slight effusion of blood. He is naught as a swordsman; but he pinked my arm, being the cooler of the two; there was no other reason for his success. My sword-arm,

too; 'twas mightily inconvenient to wear it in a sling for three long weeks, all through "fighting wild," as we say, and neglecting science. Had my head been cool, Mr. Forrest might have learnt a salutary lesson; but 'twas flustered with rage and wine, and thus he won his advantage .... It skills not talking of a foolish business .... I little dreamed that his insolence might one day push me harder still.'

He became silent; and Beatrice saw that he was retracing the whole course of this unlucky quarrel; the irritation—the affront—the challenge; the meeting in some quiet spot—the attempted mediation of friends—the trivial unsatisfactory wound which ended the affair in a some-

what humiliating manner. His brow grew dark, as he pondered; and his sister's cheek grew pale. There was little speech between them, of a pleasant nature, that afternoon.

Beatrice Cope was the more anxious to meet her brother again, on account of this jarring note of discord which had been struck between them. Her mind being much absorbed in the desire to reconcile him to the thought of her approaching marriage, she used less caution in resorting a third time to the Forester's Ash. On previous occasions she had looked and listened carefully as she drew near the spot; now she began to sing at once, scarcely glancing to the right hand or to the left. Her voice was pitched very low;

but this, perhaps, did not render the sound less significant. Clearly, she sang with a purpose just then; though any chance passer-by might be puzzled to discover what the purpose could be.

For the first time no answering response was made to the gay ditty; the silence of the woods at noonday remained unbroken. Then Beatrice started, and looked around her with sudden recollection. Surely the bushes behind her were stirred as by a hasty movement, the very moment she turned her head? She had some presence of mind; and, instead of becoming instantly silent, she sang little snatches of other songs, as she strolled on beyond the Forester's Ash. A stray auditor, did any such linger near, might well think now

that this gay intermittent warbling proceeded from pure lightsomeness of heart. Many a girl will sing thus, up and down the house and about the garden-ground, through a long summer day.

Beatrice considered whether to return by the Forester's Ash, or to resign her purpose for that afternoon. By degrees the idea that Charlie might not have been at their trysting-place gained upon her mind; and she began to think that the hasty plunge of some startled animal into the bushes had probably occasioned her panic.

She had seen nothing, save the quivering and swaying of light twigs. Her action in turning to look behind her might well have scared some timid hare or

rabbit, and caused it to leap into covert ere a human eye rested upon it.

Charlie had said he would be at the Forester's Ash that afternoon; yet nothing was more likely than that some accidental hindrance might have delayed him by the way. Beatrice herself had had much difficulty in evading Bessie's companionship; and the very difficulty she had had in leaving Crowe Hall unobserved made her the more unwilling to forfeit the meeting she sought.

After a few minutes' consideration, Beatrice made her way once more to the Forester's Ash.

CHAPTER II.

SHE had walked slowly, and loitered; nearly an hour, she calculated, must have elapsed since she passed the spot before. An interval long enough for prudence, she thought; yet not so long that her brother, supposing him to arrive a few minutes after her unsuccessful attempt to attract his attention, should have given her up for that day, and set out on his return to Goodrest.

Beatrice's heart fluttered as she drew near the trysting-place; and the deep hush and loneliness of the spot oppressed her spirit. The idea that she had been followed returned upon her; she wished that she had taken a different path, and refrained from repassing the Forester's Ash. Her eyes explored each side of the path with painful apprehension; she dreaded to see—yet not to see was worse by far. She must know whether prying eyes lay in wait for her, ere beginning to sing the air which should summon Charlie from his concealment.

As she advanced she caught a glimpse of a man's russet cloak moving swiftly from point to point through the underwood; and for one terrible instant her heart stood

still. Then, quick as thought, she recognised her brother. She drew a deep breath of relief; and the nameless tremor of her nerves passed away.

Charlie emerged from the path very cautiously.

'Hist!' he said, holding aside the briary tangle, and raising his finger in a warning attitude. He too looked and listened, as Beatrice had done; then he beckoned his sister into the tangled track which he made clear for her.

'I have a snug little nook in here,' he said. 'We must desert the Forester's Ash; for the place has been haunted all afternoon by a woman gathering sticks. An officious, meddlesome old crone, in good sooth! with the whole woodland before

her, she must need intrude upon our privacy by dallying here. 'Twas on her account I could not answer you when you passed this way before; I knew not what her presence might portend.'

'Is she gone?' asked Beatrice, trembling.

'Nay, that I know not; she is out of sight, at all rates. 'Tis lucky that I donned this sober garb to-day; even her parcel-blind eyes might have caught the glint of a scarlet cloak. I was somewhat uneasy lest you should return too soon; sooth to say, I liked not her manner of lingering in a locality generally avoided. Is not this a bower befitting Titania herself, Beatrice?'

Truly it was a lovely spot, such as may now and then be found set like a gem in the

heart of the woods. Soft green moss lay spread as a close carpet in the little dell; creeping ivy, of the small pointed kind in which the tracery of white veins is beautifully manifest, covered the banks, binding the moss together with firm yet delicate tendrils; wild honeysuckle perfumed the air, and aspiring traveller's-joy flung its heavy garlands still higher among the hazel-bushes and larch-trees, forming a profuse environment of sweet-scented tufts and bright leaves. And a briar-rose, flowering late in the shade, cast a canopy of buds and blossoms over a hillock of moss which offered an attractive seat large enough to accommodate the brother and sister.

'Our own white rose,' said young Cope, reaching up absently to pull down a spray

on which a half-blown rose, very white and silvery, was set off by many buds just bursting their green sheaths.

While he and his sister talked, he trimmed away the thorns, and made a posy of rosebuds for her to wear, doing this with slight apparent heed, as he had slashed the bark of the old ash-tree a few days ago. Yet he gave her the flowers at last with some seriousness of intention.

'Our badge,' he said. 'The white rose and the white cockade. Ah, Beatrice, these emblems should mean to you as much or more than they mean to me. I am my father's representative; but you were his darling—his pet and plaything in many a weary hour. 'Tis passing strange to me—a thing I find scarce credible—

that you should choose to marry away from us; that you should disown the traditionary principles of our house.'

Beatrice laid her fingers upon the stem, once so thorny, now so smoothly trimmed by her brother's knife.

'Will not the white rose one day shed her thorns?' she said, with a pleading smile more wistful than tears. 'Will not all Englishmen be united again, Charlie? Sure, this unhappy feud of Jacobite and Hanoverian cannot for ever divide the land. There will come a time when men can meet in amity, be their political creed what it may; when a Jacobite's daughter may wed with one who has borne arms for the present Government. Leave me that hope, at least. Remember that our father

sent me, a little child knowing naught of these matters, ready to meet love with love, to Crowe Hall long ago. Remember that during all these years, affection and kindness have been my portion; that my cousins are to me as brothers and sisters; that when Raymond Forrest courted me first, I knew no barrier betwixt him and me. And now he has my promise; a promise I can never take back. Consider——'

She broke off, in much agitation; and her brother, little used perhaps to encounter such real and simple feeling, made no hasty answer. He remained silent for a moment or two.

Then he said, with a resumption of his careless tone,

'The old wives say that marriages are

made in heaven; and truly I think you must have been trained in that faith, Beatrice. You little know how lightly promises which seem to you so weighty and binding are esteemed in the world; you little know—But, after all, 'tis scarce worth while to enlighten you. I am not certain that the latest information on these points conduces greatly to the perfecting of the sweet and womanly graces. Be as true as you will, sweetheart; but let it be to a lover whose sword will be drawn on the right side, and whom I can meet on terms of brotherhood. And now, Beatrice, we must make our adieux. The shadows lengthen; and yon intrusive stick-gatherer, concerning whom I cannot profess myself perfectly at ease, has curtailed our inter-

course cruelly. Has our worthy uncle any sinister suspicions, think you? Is he likely to set a watch upon your comings and goings?'

Beatrice could only shake her head in silent distress.

'Well, we must walk warily, henceforth. I think you must not come hither again, unless I send you word that the coast is clear, and I would speak with you.—Do you know little Bill Lampeter, Beatrice? 'Tis a very imp of mischief, but sharp as a needle, and of proved fidelity. Bill comes about Crowe Hall, as he comes about all places where there is food to be found or mischief to be done. I will even entrust him with my messages. Softly! Wait one moment, while I see that all is right.'

The woodland path seemed silent and deserted, as Charles Cope looked out from his hiding-place. Only the low chirrup of birds greeted his ear; the broad sunbeams which fell between the trees and lit up many a shadowy dell with the full golden light of evening, revealed no glimpse of the bent figure of that persistent gatherer of sticks. Doubtless she had filled her apron long ago, slow and feeble though she appeared to be, and was even now kindling her evening blaze upon some chilly cottage hearth.

The young man made his way back to Goodrest cheerfully, fearing no espionage. But Beatrice, as she sped along the path which led to Crowe Hall, began to imagine a disquieting echo to her own light steps.

A narrow path, just wide enough to be trodden by one person, ran parallel to the broader walk—just a little keeper's track, winding in and out between beech-trees, and fenced from sight by the thick, strong growth of evergreens. This track was always covered with fallen beechnuts and dry leaves, which lingered from season to season; and Beatrice thought that a quick pattering step kept time to her own like a refrain.

There is something in the sound of steps out of sight which agitates the mind with a sense of mystery; even when there is no cause for fear; and Beatrice, alas! had cause sufficient to arouse painful apprehension. Her strained ears certified her that the step was either that of a woman or a child.

She hurried on; and the accompanying footfall grew quicker, with now and then a little tap, as though a stick helped the pedestrian to maintain this rapid rate of progress. She walked very slowly, and even stopped altogether; and then the rustling and crackling of the dry beech-mast and leaves became very faint and soon sank into silence. Whoever trod the hidden path, certainly waited upon the young girl's footsteps.

Beatrice walked on steadily after ascertaining this. She preserved her composure; but the relief with which she saw the wider opening of the path upon the lawn can be more easily imagined than described. The evergreens grew sparser, and were broken into clumps; and Beatrice, who had not

dared to try to penetrate the thick screen, turned her head swiftly as she passed the first slight break in their serried ranks. She saw a pair of eyes, beneath a dark-brown hood; a pair of eyes, porcelain-blue in colour, and singularly frigid in their fixed and almost fierce regard.

Beatrice thought she knew the eyes, as she quivered beneath their icy gaze. Yet where and when, under what altered surroundings, had she seen them before?—She could not tell; and the lower part of the face, as well as the forehead, was hidden from sight.

Beatrice Cope flew across the wide velvety lawns like a lapwing; and did not see the substantial figure of her cousin Tom until she had well-nigh

run against him in the shadow of the portico.

'Why, Beatrice, whither away in such haste?' he asked, good-humouredly. 'You run like a hunted creature, and look pale and distraught as a wandering ghost. Have you seen the Good People in the wood? Where is your constant shadow, little Bess?'

'Oh, I don't know, Tom—let me go; don't keep me. I am late already,' panted Beatrice.

'Well, well! and have we none of us been late before?' said good-natured Tom. 'The skies will not fall on that account, I daresay. Is it a lecture from Granny that you fear? or have Frank and Prue brought word from Drumscour that Dame Alicia

Forrest loves not unpunctual folk? Eh, Beatrice? Ah, now indeed is the true explanation reached!'

'Oh, do not laugh at me!' poor Beatrice cried, with the sudden petulance of fatigue, fright, and distress; and she wrenched her slim hand from Tom's large loose clasp, and hurried within doors, leaving her cousin somewhat perplexed in mind.

'This marrying is but a poor business after all,' Tom Hunter reflected. 'Here is little Beatrice, once the blithest of our girls, an altered creature already. She will mope for hours. I have seen her dull as a caged blackbird, myself; and then, if one does but speak a word amiss, she will ruffle her features, and peck to right and left like an enraged wood-pigeon. Why,

now, should she quarrel with me, because I suggest that Dame Alicia Forrest has a punctual soul?—An that were the worst we knew of my much esteemed aunt at Drumscour, Beatrice might hold herself fortunate. But this, I dare to say, is the very crook of the whole matter; poor Bee would fain be approved in a quarter wherein there is no approval for her.—Well, I care not how long we are spared another marriage-contract here. There is something mightily disturbing in the whole affair, to my thinking.'

And honest Tom went yawning in to the solid and abundant meal which closed the day at Crowe Hall.

CHAPTER III.

THE owner of the frigid eyes, before which Beatrice Cope had shrunk, stepped cautiously from the shelter of the woodland into the gathering shadows beyond. She soon reached a keeper's lodge in the park; and, lifting the latch without ceremony, went in, unfastening the loose cloak she wore, and setting down her basket, with the few sticks she had gathered, upon the

stone floor. She stooped no longer now; her step was firm, though not rapid; her carriage was erect; and her eyes blazed with suppressed excitement and fiery feeling. This was no peasant-woman, with mind engaged in the gathering of sticks; but a haughty lady, whose will had been crossed, and whose pride was insulted even by a discovery which gratified her.

The keeper's mother, a humble quiet old woman, came forward to take the cloak and basket, which were her own property.

'Your ladyship will want these things no more?' she said.

'How know you that?' returned Dame Alicia Forrest, sternly.

'I saw Mistress Beatrice Cope flit across the lawns but now, my lady. And I said

to myself, "She has met the gallant young gentleman in the wood."'

Dame Alicia did not speak immediately. She would have no confidences with Phœbe Hutton; but Phœbe's eyes were watching her, and Phœbe's mind knew all. Phœbe, however, was not prepared to find a curious element of distress in the proud Dame's certainty. The keeper's mother had imagined that the breaking-off of a distasteful marriage would bring pure joy to Dame Alicia Forrest.

'For I would be glad enough to see our Dickon quit of a bride I misliked, choose how the matter went off,' thought Phoebe, to herself. 'A man soon consoles himself for a lost love; but an ill-assorted marriage is a sore evil which knows no cure. Sir

Raymond will go away to the foreign wars for awhile, or to London-town maybe; and forget Madam Beatrice in the twinkling of an eye.'

Thus Phœbe Hutton meditated, while Dame Alicia pondered silently. Presently the lady asked:

'How many of these fair meetings have taken place, think you?'

Phœbe prepared herself for a lengthy tale.

'Our Dickon, madam, hath seen the young gentleman a many times and oft,' she said. 'He comes and goes from Goodrest, Dickon believes; and he has no mind to be seen, neither: but there! 'tis no use a-trying to throw Dickon off a warm scent, and him bred to the keepering from a boy.

Dickon soon saw there was a weazel afoot; else why should the young gentleman lie whole days in the wood nigh the Forester's Ash? And then Mistress Beatrice began to come that way, alone, without Mistress Bessie at her side. And your ladyship knows 'tis rare to see the one without the t'other. So Dickon he thought at first 'twas to meet Sir Raymond that Madam Beatrice walked alone; and to be sure that were no business of Dickon's; so he took no heed of it. Dickon, he hears no news; a might a'most as well be blind and deaf, for he cares for naught but the woods and they woodland creatures. But still one day he chances to hear tell as Sir Raymond was away to Berwick, and had been gone this great while past; and then

he says to me, "Mother," says he, "there be some'at amiss yonder at the Great House." "Why, what be wrong there, lad?" says I. "I dunnot rightly know, yet," says Dick, very slow and quiet like. "But I means to find out, this day as ever is." And when he comed in to supper at the dusk-hour, he were not his ordinar', by no means; and I saw he were put about terrible. And by-and-bye he shuts-to the door and the window. "Mother," says he, "'tis the stranger gentleman as Madam Beatrice walks in the woods to meet. I saw them part but now," says he; "and there can't be no good out o' that. For she's promised to Sir Raymond Forrest, as all the country-side do know. What have she to do with meeting a stranger from

Goodrest?" says Dickon, all flustered like. And then he were for making known to Squire that as he had seen. But I says, "No, Dickon; fair and softly goes far in a day. The Squire 'ull be sore angered," says I, "and he's known for a hasty man. Do 'ee think he'll abide the sight of 'ee long, after telling of him bad tidings? How-soe'er the matter goes, there be one thing sure and certain; thee'lt lose thy lodge and thy woodland walk, as sure as thy name be Dick Hutton. Now I be going up to Drumscour," I says, "with the laced pinners I have been clear-starching for Dame Alicia; and I will get speech of her ladyship quietly, and speak to her as one woman to another, making no noise and no harm. 'Twill be better for thee than

that the Squire's beard should be in a blaze, as we say in these parts. And Dame Alicia, she 'ull do that as is right and befitting," says I. And so Dickon after awhile——'

'I asked how long this acquaintance you wot of has gone forward, Phœbe Hutton?' said the lady, breaking in upon the recital of Dick's scruples and perplexities.

She had given slight attention to Phœbe's words: her mind was occupied in piecing together the details of the afternoon, and in forecasting things yet to come.

The keeper's mother could give no very clear answer to this repeated question. Only, since a story always grows in the

repetition, the result of her confused cogitations was naturally somewhat in excess of the truth.

Dame Alicia left the keeper's lodge believing that Beatrice Cope's meetings with the mysterious stranger had begun months ago.

She sat late that evening, writing to her son; the flame of her taper twinkled until the great clock in the hall of Drumscour had tolled one. Yet after all the letter was not sent. Dame Alicia tore it into small pieces in the morning and despatched an express to Berwick with a verbal message requesting Sir Raymond to come to her without delay.

Sir Raymond came, in hot haste, with little time at his disposal in which to

ascertain whether his house was on fire, his plate-chest pillaged, or his mother on her death-bed. For warrants were out to arrest Mr. Forster and Lord Derwentwater, members of Parliament for the county; and all was bustle and excitement among the military, who had sundry sealed orders to put in execution at this not unforseeen crisis. Therefore a brief ten minutes were all which remained to Raymond Forrest at Drumscour—a brief ten minutes, in which the healthy, ruddy tint of youth paled upon his bronzed cheek, the careless smile of youth died away from his lip.

He looked ten years older when his mother's tale was spoken; and Dame Alicia, proud though she was, quailed a

little before the dumb sternness of this man whom she had held in her arms a tiny helpless baby scarce eight-and-twenty years ago. He shielded his brow with his hand, as one who strives to steady dizzy thoughts and whirling fancies. Then he looked up; and his voice was hoarse and changed.

'Mother!' he said, 'was there none else who could play the spy for you?—You never loved her . . . I would my sisters were home!'

'You say truly,' said Dame Alicia, coldly. 'I never loved her; but why? Can a mother's instinct err, Raymond? I trow not. If I loved not your Beatrice 'twas because I saw in her that which you could not perceive. And if I played the

spy'—a crimson wave of colour passed over the lady's faded cheek and brow—'twas because I deemed your honour safer in my hands than in those of any mean person of low estate. I had no mind that your matters should be spoken of among grooms and gamekeepers. The silence of the Huttons, mother and son, is secured. Dickon is a silent, faithful fellow, scarce more given to babbling than his deerhound Oscar. And Phœbe loves golden guineas, and can discern her own interest and his. She knows their lodge would soon be empty, did she allow her tongue to wag of Mistress Beatrice and the handsome young man from Goodrest. Proof was necessary; and proof I have secured. But I have done nought to

injure her for whom you have so deep a tenderness.'

There was a world of scorn in the last words; but Raymond's mind was fixed upon those which went before.

'From Goodrest!' he repeated; and then a thought of comfort flashed into his mind; his brow cleared; and he drew a long breath of relief.

'Mother,' he said, 'pardon me if I have spoken unbeseemingly: For the moment I was maddened; but I see light now. This is a sad business, yet not such as you imagine. This man is from Goodrest, say you? That explains all. Some friend in days gone by—some black shadow reaching out of a mournful past. My poor little bird! had I been at hand she would have

told me all: I could have shielded and helped her. Who knows how her tender heart may have been worked upon? Who knows——'

'This man could have been but a stripling when her father's death-knell was tolled,' said Dame Alicia, in low metallic tones. 'And 'tis scarce necessary to part from her father's friend with an embrace, methinks; that were an overstraining of dutiful courtesy, sure? Unless, indeed, new fashions have come in from France, Raymond.'

The young man started, stung to the very quick; then controlled himself, and said firmly,

'What like was he—this man of whom you speak?'

'He was, as I should guess, about your own age, but somewhat taller and considerably slighter in build. He wore a fair peruke, tied with a dark riband; and his dress, though plain, was exquisitely well appointed. His eyes were blue, and very swift and observant in their glances.—I am but a poor limner, Raymond; I can give you no graphic sketch. But, as I marked this young gentleman, I could not fail to think upon a very finished description of a certain Person beyond the seas, which Ermine, who is ever overmuch beguiled by thoughts of that ill-fated dynasty, procured from a lady who had been in attendance on Mary Beatrice. If I had not known that Person to be beyond the seas——'

'Pardon, madam. Of whom do you speak?'

'I speak of the Pretender,' said Dame Alicia, her tone sinking into a clear whisper.

Sir Raymond Forrest remained silent while one might tell five or six beats of a man's strong even pulse. His hands lay clasped together upon the table before him; his eyes, with the restless instinct of supreme misery, swept the retired bowling-green upon which his mother's sitting-room looked out, from end to end. They ached with the strain of this fixed yet idle regard, and were bloodshot with the sudden fever of brain and nerve, when he turned them upon his mother once more.

'The Pretender is reported to be in England,' he said, in a whisper lower than her own. 'We have orders to search Goodrest, and arrest Templar.'

CHAPTER IV.

WHILE Sir Raymond Forrest and his mother sat together that morning, and the whole country-side was in a ferment of suppressed excitement, as tidings came in from Scotland creating terror in one household and joy in another, a messenger was sent from Whiteoaks to Crowe Hall.

Madam Pettigrew was much agitated by the news of the rising; much fluttered and disturbed also, for she, like many

other Northumbrian women, scarce knew on which side her hopes really lay. She thought of her dead brother, who had clung to the Stuart line; of her good neighbours at Crowe Hall, who held by the Hanoverian settlement; of my Lord Derwentwater, with whom she had walked a minuet in her youth, and who was now like enough to lose his head on a charge of high treason.

Mistress Delia was a person of weak health and excitable spirits; and all this perturbation joined to some over-fatigue in quest of news, and many sleepless nights of alarm lest the Earl of Mar's army, or King George's dragoons, should descend upon her little lonely homestead, had thrown her into a nervous fever. She had

a great fancy for the society of Mistress Beatrice Cope, under these circumstances; not that Beatrice could be reckoned a very effective addition to the garrison of White-oaks. But Beatrice had produced a pleasing impression during her visit to Mistress Delia, who no longer preferred Prue or Bessie.

Mistress Delia thought that Beatrice's light step and soft voice would be welcome under present circumstances. Beatrice would tell her all that was said at Crowe Hall, at this time of crisis; and the long anxious days would pass less slowly and wearily with the aid of the gentle young guest.

So an imploring summons was sent to Crowe Hall, beseeching Mistress Beatrice

to mount the steady sorrel without delay, and ride through the deep lanes once more behind old Thomas, who 'could not abide the worrit of young folk continual-like, not if 'twere ever so.'

Mistress Delia differed from Thomas in earnestly desiring the company and protection of young folk just now; and she would have rejoiced could one of the lads from the Hall have been induced to take the old servant's place as escort, with a prospect of remaining a few days at White-oaks. Such a defender would have been welcome, although he wore clumping boots, slammed doors, and whistled morning, noon, and night.

But the young Hunters were full of bustle and animation, and had no wish to

sequestrate themselves from sight and sound of martial enterprise, in the dim seclusion of Whiteoaks. They laughed at Madam Pettigrew's fears for her household, which were indeed sufficiently groundless, since neither party was like to waste time in molesting a person so inoffensive.

The mistress of Whiteoaks had neither great wealth nor obtrusive politics to render her obnoxious to spoil or insult. She might be requested to furnish a meal for King George's troops; or, in the event of a descent from Scotland, Mar's Highland auxiliaries might use scant ceremony in making free with her poultry, her pigeons, and her sheep. But these depredations would be committed in passing; White-

oaks had no serious danger to fear from either force.

So, at least, did Squire Hunter and his sons aver, when Granny seemed loth that Beatrice should go to lonely Whiteoaks. Delia Pettigrew had far better come to Crowe Hall, if she were timorous of molestation, than take away one of the lasses to share her peril, be it great or be it small, said Granny with her usual sound sense; and 'young madam' echoed Granny's opinion earnestly.

But Mistress Delia's ambassador represented that she was unfit for the ride to Crowe Hall; and, moreover, what was to become of her household in her absence? 'When the cat's away, the mice will play,' was an adage frequently on Mistress Delia's

lips, and upon which she acted very consistently. Her ruddy-cheeked Joan, Patty, and Eliza had few opportunities for idleness and divertisement. Mistress Delia's eye was seldom off them; and Mistress Delia, though quaking sorely, would not desert her post now, in her house of Whiteoaks.

She did not wish to disband her household servants, and leave her family treasures a prey to the spoiler. Yet she much desired company and support; and she put great faith in a certain herb-tea for which Crowe Hall was famous. Beatrice Cope, she knew, possessed the secret which gave special worth to this distillation. Every farmer's dame could brew herb-tea, after a fashion; but old Madam Hunter's draughts had a singular virtue, and were prized as a

sovereign specific by those who could obtain them.

This complimentary recognition of Granny's medical skill went far to win 'young madam' to look favourably upon the request for Beatrice Cope's attendance. If Mistress Delia's recovery really depended upon the due administration of the Crowe Hall remedies, she said, 'twas unkind to withhold the aid thus sought. And then the Squire, and Tom, and Wilfrid, and even Bob also, joining in after the manner of boys, laughed to scorn the idea of any peril which might threaten Whiteoaks in these September days.

Thus it came to pass that Granny, for once in her life, was over-ruled, Mistress Beatrice, for her part, having an eager

desire to pack up her little parcels and begone. For she felt a very strong wish to be away from Crowe Hall—to look upon different scenes—to await her fate elsewhere.

She could not tell what a day might bring forth; and ever, sleeping and waking, those cold observant eyes, seen for one brief moment as she threaded the outskirt of the wood, haunted her. All night the memory of them had disturbed her sleep; and during the morning nothing had banished them, until this message of entreaty from Madam Pettigrew broke the spell under which the girl lay. And perhaps the remembrance that the great bliss of her youth had come to her at Whiteoaks made the very name of the place sound

like an omen of good in the ears of Mistress Beatrice Cope.

Her first thought was that if her brother required to see her again, a meeting could be more safely arranged anywhere else than in the grounds of Crowe Hall. 'Twas a great matter that these dangerous visits of his to the vicinity of the Forester's Ash should receive an instant check.

Therefore Beatrice made up her packages with much alacrity, while Bessie Hunter helped and hindered, protesting against the filling of the little trunk, which was to be sent by the carrier's cart on Saturday, did Madam Pettigrew urge her young friend to prolong her stay.

'And that she is sure to do,' grumbled Bessie. 'Cousin Delia's nervous fever

will scarce be cured come Christmas, I promise you, if your stay depends on its continuance!'

'Then, Bess, were I Cousin Delia, I should begin to desire a change of nurse and physician long ere Christmas-tide comes round,' said Beatrice. 'Help me to fold this quilted petticoat, ladybird; is not the satin of a lovely changeful hue, like to the shifting colours on a peacock's neck and breast?—Bessie, Bessie! have you a mind to punish me for wishing to nurse poor Mistress Delia, by spoiling my holiday garb? Who ever heard of folding a silken skirt in the middle of the front breadth, in the name of wonder? And here is my new paduasoy craves ceremonious handling.'

Beatrice was able to talk of the satin petticoat and dainty paduasoy; and even —so potent is feminine instinct—to think of them too, while the full force of her mind was engrossed by considerations as to the method in which she could best send word to her brother of her change of residence. The supposed Mr. Vanburgh was of course the obvious means of communication; and Beatrice always shrank with nervous misgivings from private discourse with him. He would doubtless know of her sudden departure from Crowe Hall; but she dreaded lest he should fail to send speedy word to Charlie, and that rash young gentleman should again revert to the locality wherein they had been watched and spied upon the day before.

Recognizing the necessity of instant warning to Charlie, Beatrice endeavoured to see Mr. Vanburgh before she left; but opportunities do not always come when most earnestly desired, and her nerve failed a little, so that she could not attempt any daring step.

Anne and Prue and Bessie were hither and thither, lamenting her departure, and begging her not to stay long with Madam Pettigrew; the boys, too, had last words to say.

Beatrice felt like a person in a dream; and could only meet each exigency as it arose. She laughed and joked with the others, when they tried to scare her with whimsical representations of danger at Whiteoaks, and asked whether she felt her

courage high enough to be Madam Pettigrew's lieutenant. She laughed, too, when they threatened her with Raymond Forrest's displeasure; but a sore aching of the heart underlay that mirth.

'What will Raymond say when he comes here and finds the bird flown?' cried Prue; and the brothers rejoined that Raymond would be taken down a peg or two in his own estimation presently. Evidently he was not to have everything his own way just yet, they said; Mistress Beatrice meant to keep him humble and thankful.

In the midst of their witticisms, Beatrice rode away; and never a word had she the chance of speaking to Mr. Vanburgh. He had not appeared at all; and

now, as the sorrel horse jogged slowly along, she began to blame herself for cowardice and indecision. If it so fell out that her departure was not known to the tutor until evening, her brother might run a whole day's risk in those woods which were not safe.

Beatrice shivered a little in the warm September sunshine, as she dwelt upon those words 'not safe.' An unknown danger is always most terrible; she wondered who could have spied upon her so resolutely yesterday? The owner of those eyes must surely be fierce and cruel, without pity. Then she remembered a feature of the affair which had not previously struck her: the spy had left watching Charlie in order to follow her.

This thought came with a flash of relief to Beatrice Cope. She did not greatly fear ill-natured gossip; Raymond, she thought, would surely trust her, even though she could give him no clear explanation of any accusation which might be circulated secretly. At all events, in the fear for her brother's life, personal fears shrank and dwindled away into insignificance.

Beatrice did not chat with old Thomas this time, as upon a previous journey to Whiteoaks; but sat passive behind him, turning many thoughts in her head. As for Thomas, he desired no talking. He proceeded quietly on his way, now and then whisking off the flies from the sorrel's ears and encouraging the creature with

curious, half-articulate sounds, according to the practice of carters and such folk.

As the horse plodded slowly on towards the brow of a long hill, Beatrice, who was looking in front with somewhat blank and anxious eyes, thinking always of Charlie and his perilous predicament, espied a small, elfish figure which stood dark for a moment against the bright sky-line, and then dropped suddenly out of sight, probably into shadow of the heavy tangle overhanging a wayside ditch.

Quick as thought she drew out her tablets, a present from Tom Hunter, made of ivory and mounted with silver. Beatrice had been very proud of Tom's birthday present, but she was about to trust it on an uncertain venture now. Behind

Thomas' broad back she indited a few words upon the delicate surface. Then she detached the slight silver chain which secured the tablets at her waist, and waited.

The sorrel proceeded deliberately onwards; old Thomas surveyed the busy harvest-fields just coming into view; and Beatrice with seeking eyes explored the ditch by which they passed. She leant a little from her seat; in her left hand, which hung loosely down, she held her tablets and a piece of shining money bright as they.

Presently she saw Bill Lampeter, the boy whom her brother had mentioned as a trustworthy go-between, squatting among the fern and bramble, and looking up roguishly at Master Thomas the groom, as

though considering whether his dignified position in life must be held to exempt him from practical joking.

Bill was sorely tempted to throw up his arms and cry, 'whir-r-r,' as the horse and rider went by. But Master Thomas' whip looked heavy, especially towards the butt-end; and Bill did not like to banish himself from the grounds and out-buildings of Crowe Hall by any act of too daring aggression.

His attention wandered from Master Thomas, however, the instant he perceived that the beautiful young lady on the pillion was leaning towards him trying to catch his eye, and pressing her finger to her lip in sign of silence. Bill was all alertness, then. For one second he was

close to Beatrice's hand; and the tablets and the money passed from her slim white fingers and embroidered glove of scented Spanish leather to Bill's hard little paw, brown with exposure and strong as steel. Then he was out of sight again; and Beatrice silently thanked Heaven for one of those favourable chances which are so welcome in straits and necessity. Now Charlie would be warned; now, did this boy but prove faithful, all might be well.

She turned her head by-and-bye, for a last glance at Bill. He was just emerging from his hiding-place, an undersized urchin, twelve years old in reality, but looking scarce nine. His small features were

twisted into a grin of mingled triumph and cunning ; triumph prevailing as he looked at the money, and cunning gaining the ascendant as he considered what he must do in fulfilment of his side of the silent bargain.

Poor Beatrice, as she watched her messenger, thought that she had entrusted her brother's security and her own credit and happiness to no very safe hands. But necessity knows no choice. She hoped that little Bill might prove alike discreet and faithful.

Bill Lampeter himself had no intention of betraying the trust reposed in him. On the contrary, he was proud of it, and anxious to acquit himself in a manner which

might do honour to his sagacity. He thought the matter over, and weighed the difficulties of the position. Then, keeping under shadow of hedges, and creeping from field to field, he struck across country to Goodrest.

But Bill, as he went, heard sounds which he did not understand. He meant to cross the lane, which, winding in and out among the hills, formed the ordinary approach to Goodrest; and as he listened, with the habitual caution of a wild woodland thing ere emerging from shelter, the regular trot of many horses together struck upon his acute ear.

Bill had plenty of time to dash across the road, and get away out of sight in the fields beyond; but he did not do this. He

wanted to know the history of this strange advent, and to see the military pageant sweep by.

They came on steadily, the hoofs of the heavy troop-horses making the ground vibrate: and Bill, being only a boy, began to wish that he had made good his flight while flight were possible. He lay beneath the large dock and hemlock leaves, desperately frightened and scarcely daring to breathe. His bead-like eyes peered up at the leader of the troop, in whom he recognized Sir Raymond Forrest of Drumscour. About twenty men rode with Sir Raymond, all well-mounted, well-armed, and well-disciplined.

Bill wondered where they were going, and on what errand they were bound.

Horses and men were weary and dusty, having come from Berwick that morning at a rapid pace in the blaze of a powerful sun; and Bill, seeing this, surmised that they would not pass the little inn in the valley, called 'The Silent Woman,' without some pause for refreshment. Thence they would doubtless proceed to Goodrest by the road, since bridle-paths would be inconvenient for so large a number, although Sir Raymond Forrest possessed over-much local knowledge.

Thus Bill reasoned, speedily concluding that the party were bound for Goodrest, and the intended harassment of some person or persons there.

Presently he remembered the tablets in his hand, and the whispered name the

young lady had spoken. Bill could not read—the writing upon the ivory was a dead letter to him; but his quick little wits at once jumped at the conclusion that he was to warn Mr. Cope of this very peril; and that, unless he made the better haste, he would be too late.

Trusting much to the probable pause before the door of 'The Silent Woman,' Bill darted away; running at the best speed which his wiry body and long breath could accomplish.

And Beatrice Cope, dismounting from the sorrel horse before Madam Pettigrew's door, little dreamt that Charlie's future fortunes depended upon the fleetness of little Bill, who was pressing up the last hill with a dry throat and a stitch in his

side, as she sipped her chocolate and looked round the tranquil parlour in which Raymond Forrest first knelt at her feet. She thought of him, not of Charlie—yet Charlie's life hung in the balance, while his sister sat smiling with dreamy eyes.

CHAPTER V.

BILL LAMPETER was only just in time to save the gentlemen at Goodrest from a sudden and inconvenient check to all their machinations. He dared not waste a moment in searching for Mr. Cope; a word to the porter, Job Eccles, was all poor Bill had strength and leisure to speak, ere he fled back into the waste places he knew so well.

Thanks, however, to his warning, the

dragoons found a very quiet household at Goodrest. There were few men about the place, and those there were were old, and for the most part deaf. Such hindrances as deafness and stupidity can interpose were indeed presented; and the young commander suspected that Goodrest, an hour ago, had worn a different aspect.

Mr. Templar, the butler said, was in foreign parts, and had not been heard of lately. Some uneasiness was felt on his account, the old man added, shaking his white head. In the master's absence all went very quietly at Goodrest. But if Sir Raymond had orders to search the premises, doubtless he could go over the house from attic to cellar without contradiction.

Sir Raymond Forrest was under orders to search Goodrest with minute and thorough exactness. He conducted his examination of the rambling old house with all imaginable courtesy, however, disturbing the inmates as little as possible, and extending marked consideration towards the gentle ladies who were occupied as usual with their embroidery frames, their distillations, their music, and their prayers. Such arms as he found he seized; but these weapons were old and cumbrous, and of small value.

Sir Raymond rode away, meditative and much depressed at the ill-success of his expedition; sorely troubled, too, as to his own private affairs.

Soon after he got to quarters, a sealed

note was brought him from one high in command, the contents whereof wrought an entire change in his frame of mind.

'Our information proves false,' wrote the general; 'the Person sought is at present north of the Tweed. Secure constant tidings of what goes on at Goodrest, and send scouts along the Border country each day.'

Then came a list of the points at which a descent from Scotland was thought probable, with strict injunctions as to the management of scouting-parties.

Raymond Forrest was much on the alert that evening, and earned the credit of a very smart and competent officer. His manner was more than commonly swift and decisive; his faculties seemed to be

wholly given to the task entrusted to his command. He had ridden far that day; but no touch of weariness dulled his perceptions or cooled his energy. He laughed gaily to himself, as he tossed off an unusually deep draught of excellent Burgundy.

'Nothing like warming to one's work, is there, Forrest?' said one of his brother-officers, at the mess-table. 'The smell of powder from t'other side the Border is a jolly elixir. Here's confusion to the Pope, the Pretender, and that sly old fox at Goodrest.'

Sir Raymond drank the toast with honours; but neither the smell of powder, nor the good wine, were responsible for the exhilaration of his spirits. The words

'Information false' kept sounding in his ears. And he said to himself again and again that where one mistake had been, another was possible; and reminded himself that his mother Dame Alicia had never liked Beatrice Cope. Doubtless some chance resemblance had beguiled eyes very ready to be deceived; 'twas some other figure than that of his betrothed which flitted to and fro beneath the Forester's Ash.

At the first available opportunity Sir Raymond visited Crowe Hall, hoping to see his lady-love. But Beatrice was not there; and the trivial fact that he had not been informed of her departure for White-oaks aroused the moody spirit within the young man's heart once more. To send

news from place to place was no easy matter at this juncture; and the party at the Hall were quite unconscious that Raymond could imagine himself possessed of any ground for offence.

They perceived that he was not in his ordinary spirits; but this they attributed to disappointment at not finding her whom he sought. And—very unfortunately, as it happened—Frank and Prue, the 'wags' of the family, amused themselves with sundry witticisms respecting Beatrice's willingness to reinforce Madam Pettigrew's garrison.

The little harmless jests with which their cousin went away were repeated to this man in whose brain and heart suspicion lurked; suspicion firmly forced down, yet

vigilant and unresting, watching ever for trifling indications by which to gauge the depths of the love he was beginning to question.

Raymond Forrest rode away from Crowe Hall in a temper of mind which boded ill for Mistress Beatrice Cope. And when he presented himself at Whiteoaks, his whole intention with regard to her had undergone a change. Had he found her at Crowe Hall, he would have spoken earnestly and openly of the mysterious tale he had been told, only reserving the name of his informant; but the idea that she had fled from him entirely altered his purpose. He would see, he thought, how she met him, and draw his own conclusions from look and tone.

And then he winced before a sudden remembrance of his mother's comments upon Beatrice Cope's changing colour and fragile appearance, soon after her engagement with him was announced.

'Mistress Beatrice bears her triumph meekly,' said scornful Dame Alicia, then. 'One would not say, to look at her, that her betrothal brings much joy.'

'Oh, madam, I pray you hush!' Ermine had cried.

Raymond remembered words and tone vividly, although he had been too happy to give much thought to his mother's haughty contempt or his sister's deprecating appeal. Ermine's entreaty for silence recurred to him with more force than Dame Alicia's attack, now, in his doubt

and despondency. A chill misgiving crossed his mind, and turned his face to stone.

CHAPTER VI.

SIR RAYMOND FORREST found some difficulty in accomplishing a visit to Whiteoaks in these bustling times. However, he appeared there one day, somewhat weary with riding—far wearier with brooding over thoughts which did not please.

Beatrice Cope's first feeling was one of dismay, as she looked into his altered countenance, and received his grave and formal greeting. The times, she thought,

must sure be very evil, if anxieties connected with the rising in Scotland could change Raymond thus.

Mistress Delia was present when the lovers met; and Mistress Delia, under all circumstances, was more than willing to assume the chief part in conversation. She had much to say to Sir Raymond on the disturbed state of the country; and Beatrice sat by, swift flames of colour coming and going in her cheeks, and a great dread taking possession of her fluttering heart.

She and Charlie had been watched, she knew, in the woods at Crowe Hall . . . . If this strange new Raymond, with the stern set countenance and low unvarying voice, should question her by-and-bye, how much might she safely say?

Beatrice began to think that she must choose between her lover's truth and her brother's life; and when once she had realized this, the brave spirit which was hers by inheritance steadied her nerves. She was pale, but very calm, when Raymond replied to some remark of Mistress Delia's by saying, in a peculiarly icy tone,

'There are some persons, madam, whose good fortune provides them with friends on both sides; and to whom the triumph of neither contending faction can be an unmixed evil. This leads to some confusion occasionally—some perplexity—some treachery, perhaps;'—here he caught his breath, as one who controls all outward expression of almost unendurable pain—'but 'tis well, doubtless, on the whole.

Come victory or defeat, these persons of whom I speak stand secure.'

'And indeed that is very true, Sir Raymond,' said Mistress Delia. 'Had my poor brother been spared to see this day, I might have been in the same case myself; for he ever stood well with the Jacobite gentry in these parts, and had a leaning towards the banished King. 'Tis like enough to be forgotten now; but should the Earl of Mar's army pass this way, I must make shift to put forward poor Willie's good neighbourhood with Squire Templar of Goodrest.'

As these words greeted his ears, Sir Raymond turned his eye upon Beatrice; and her paleness vanished, eclipsed by a blush painful to see, and painful to endure.

'Raymond,' she said, with unusual

decision of manner, 'have you a mind to survey the garden with me, if my kind cousin will excuse us awhile? The late cluster-roses are very fair upon the western trellis, are they not, Cousin Delia?'

She moved as she spoke, and seemed almost unconscious of the little hindrances which Madam Pettigrew interposed.

'Twas nigh upon the tea-hour, Mistress Delia said; and tea must not be allowed to stand. Sir Raymond had ridden many miles, and would doubtless prefer to rest himself in the quiet parlour. As for the cluster roses, they were no such sight, although Beatrice admired them. And she, Mistress Delia, had much to say to Sir Raymond—many questions yet to ask concerning the probable advance of the

Scottish army, and the best method of speaking wild Highlandmen fair.

But to these and similar sayings Mistress Beatrice paid scant attention, merely enduring the flow of words with patient eyes which looked beyond her cousin's face, and a somewhat pathetic little smile.

Mistress Delia did but speak from the habit of opposition, it being her instinct to see drawbacks to any suggestion not emanating from herself. She was not in the least offended when Sir Raymond reinforced the silent persistence which was all Beatrice felt equal to maintaining. He should much like to see the cluster roses, he said, and to enjoy a whiff of the sweet fresh air in Whiteoaks garden. They would not be oblivious of time, however.

In ten minutes, or even less, they would return to Madam Pettigrew's parlour, when he trusted to hear that her plans with regard to the Highland invaders had taken shape.

Then he bowed to the younger lady, and offered his hand to lead her to the garden, with a ceremonious politeness strained a little beyond the usual point; and the two stepped out upon the turf walk, Beatrice wearing a small hood drawn over the pretty hair which was piled high in many modish puffs.

At the bend of the path, where it wound behind apple-trees loaded with reddening fruit, and the window no longer commanded their conference, Mistress Beatrice Cope turned upon her lover. She stood

before him a slight but queenly creature, drawn up to her full height, and with that star-like innocency of eye and forehead which only true souls keep long in this world of ours.

'Sir,' she said, 'I perceive that a shadow has fallen between your mind and mine, turning you from your clear judgment of me. I feel persuaded that some one—I know not who—has aspersed my truth towards you.—And I tell you plainly, as true maid to true bachelor, that respecting this matter I can give no full explanation now.'

'Beatrice,' the young man replied, 'you have been my heart's one love. I never doubted—Heaven help me, I never doubted!—until four short days ago, that

I was yours. But I have heard strange things of you—idle tales, maybe—I know not what. Suffice it to say that I will set you free; you need no longer practise a dissimulation unworthy of yourself and insulting to me, because a promise unwillingly given binds you in uneasy fetters. I ask no questions; I do but give back what was mine only in semblance . . . 'Twas a somewhat cruel jest, as I think; I could marvel that you felt the inclination to play with me thus . . . but 'tis like you know not the pain such breach of faith inflicts. We were acquainted as children; was it so hard for you to speak the truth to me?—I might have brought forward my suit again, had you professed yourself indifferent to me; but you need

not have feared persecution from me, or over-zealous furthering of my cause on the part of my uncle. In my poor mind I think 'twas scarce necessary, this double-dealing of yours. But for the sake of the love I once bore you—for the sake of the love I believed in—let us part kindly, sparing reproaches.—I came here to-day to say this: mine errand is speedily done.'

'Raymond,' she said, with flashing eyes, 'what have you ever seen in me, that you should speak thus?—Heaven pardon you, if you can think this love of mine an empty simulation; a fleeting show, with naught real and stable in it. You may give me back my promise; but you cannot give me back my heart. In earnest verity

I pledged you that; if we part now 'tis yours in separation, as it might have been yours in union, could you have trusted me.—You know my history, and the troubles of the times; can you not imagine that there may be secrets in my keeping of which I may not—dare not—speak to you?'

She looked full in his face with eyes true and steady as those of a little child; and the mist of doubt and jealousy cleared away from the mind of Sir Raymond Forrest. The tension of his lips relaxed; his whole face softened into a natural expression once more. A quick thought flashed through his brain, as he clasped her hands in so firm a grasp that the strength of his fingers hurt her.

'Beatrice!' he said, 'pardon me one question, sweetest dearest heart!—Your only brother, as I have heard, died years in France?'

''Twas so reported,' she said.

Oh, the wide imploring gaze of those beautiful eyes! the trembling of that sensitive mouth over the secret half-told!

'You will not betray him?' she breathed. 'You will not make me my brother's murderess?'

'Heaven forbid!' he answered, still holding her hands and looking into the eyes which did not flinch. 'And may Heaven be praised that my search was fruitless, yonder afternoon at Goodrest!—Beatrice, we may meet, he and I, as man to man, each one fighting in truth and

honour upon a quarrel to which his faith stands pledged; but other wrong, I swear to you, I will do him none. If my sword meets his in fair and open fight, 'tis but the chance of war; even brothers are opposed as deadly enemies in these our civil broils.—But to have found him there at Goodrest, like a rat in a trap; to have been the means of his capture, and arrest —Bah! we will not think or talk of that, since I found him not. And now, sweet one,' can you forgive the doubt which tortured me and did you wrong?—You might, I think, could you but know the agony I have endured—did you but understand——'

Well, well!—It seemed that Mistress Beatrice's forgiveness was to be had for

the asking, and that in liberal measure. She bestowed it ungrudgingly; and the lovers were exceedingly happy in their restored confidence—a confidence which Sir Raymond thought proper to carry a point beyond that which strict prudence warranted.

Perhaps he wished to show Beatrice how completely he trusted her; perhaps he did but act upon the ill-considered impulse of the moment. At all events, he told her that he had received orders to go forth with his troop at night on important service. Information had been brought in that a strong party of Jacobite gentlemen from Scotland, bearing with them money and papers of instruction, would cross the border that night near Drumscour, on

their way to join the main body of the Stuart army now about to march into England. To prevent this junction was, of course, highly desirable; and Sir Raymond Forrest, who knew the Border-country well, and had proved himself alert and prompt in difficult service before, was chosen to conduct the night's enterprise.

Sir Raymond would have acted discreetly in keeping silence concerning his errand; but he was an impetuous, outspoken young man, and thought no harm could come of thus mentioning the chance of distinction which had fallen in his way.

Beatrice grew paler and paler as she listened to the words which told her that the tide of war was drawing near; and her heart sank down with dread for Raymond

and for those against whom he went forth; although she too, like himself, believed that this service would remove him from all probability of specially painful collision with her brother.

Since affairs were now drawing rapidly to a crisis, Charlie, doubtless, was on his way to the general rendezvous which these gentlemen were to reach by-and-bye—nay, he might be already on the spot, busied in preparation. He surely would not be with the Scottish party; but a heavy foreboding of ill crept over Beatrice's spirit nevertheless. She spoke no word of this her great terror, knowing she ought not to make the matter grievous to Sir Raymond by words of hers; only she lingered at his side as they walked together, while poor Madam

Pettigrew's tea was spoiling, and prayed in her heart that the distractions of the times might be healed.

Suddenly, as they turned their steps towards the house, Sir Raymond said:

'I do not over-well like your remaining in this lonely place, love of mine. There is no peril, that I wot of; yet 'tis surely somewhat selfish in Madam Pettigrew to withdraw you from Crowe Hall and the cheerful folk there, at a time such as this. I marvel my uncle and aunt let you go.'

'Cousin Delia was ill, you know, and I came to act sick-nurse,' said Beatrice, smiling. 'And this reminds me that we are neglecting my patient shamefully, for the sake of our own private discourse. Come, sir, quicken your steps! I have

seen when three, or at the most four, of your long paces would bring you across the width of this lawn. But none are so slow as those who have a mind to loiter,' she said, nodding her head with a pretty, imperious gesture, and waving her kerchief to impatient Mistress Delia at the window.

And after that, ten minutes or so passed swiftly and blithely in the parlour; and Mistress Delia little guessed that her young friend Beatrice had any cause for concern and anxiety. But when the farewells were over, Beatrice slipped away from her cousin, with that strange longing for one look more—one word more—which many have experienced in moments of parting.

CHAPTER VII.

SHE threw a dark cloak about her, and ran through back-passages to the stable-yard, where Sir Raymond Forrest was about to mount his horse. His groom was searching for a forgotten whip or strap in the stable; and she had an instant in which to say, with all her heart in her eyes and her entreating voice,

'Raymond, have a care of yourself to-night!'

That was all; and she could not feel much comfort in his laughing reply:

'Sweetheart, do you want to make a coward of me at this time of day?'

Then he rode off cheerily; and she stood alone at the gate, looking down the solitary lane and across some desolate fields over which a chill white mist was creeping.

The beauty of the autumn day was at an end, and a wet night was coming on. But Beatrice Cope scarcely felt the damp wind which ruffled her hair and blew the cold rain into her face. She stood there long, pondering many things, until a voice close to her interrupted her troubled thoughts. The low tones which addressed her were those of Mr. Sandiland.

'My child,' he said, regarding Beatrice with eyes which seemed to compel instant and full submission to his will; 'I have left Crowe Hall, never to return thither. I prepared the way for this step some weeks ago: your uncle does but know that the Dutch secretary, Mr. Vanburgh, has received a summons to Holland.—And now the time has come when you must choose your part. Heaven grant you strength to choose aright!—to cast away earth's dearest ties, if need be, not shrinking from the sacrifice! Bethink you—others have been so called, and have spared naught. Your father died for this quarrel, when such death came hardly. I, even I myself, have resigned all joy that life can offer, all security—even somewhat, it may be, of that

honour dear to all who bear the style of gentlemen—if in any wise I might further this righteous Cause. I would have spared you the trial, if so it might have been; but the call comes to you to-day, and must be obeyed.—'Tis merely the speaking of three words: which way does Sir Raymond ride to-night?'

How mournfully the wind moaned across the open fields!—how the branches of the trees creaked and groaned, as the gale tossed them violently to and fro, shaking down the half-ripe fruit of autumn! how heavily the rain came sweeping on in drenching gusts!

There was a pause of some moments between the two who spoke together, ere Beatrice found voice to say,

'May I know why you inquire concerning this?'

'Surely; I desire to conceal nought from you. You are possessed of the purport of his errand?'

She bowed her head.

''Tis needless, then, to enter upon that subject. Suffice it to say that if he meets with those loyal gentlemen whom he goes to seek there will be a struggle—loss of life, maybe—hindrance, without doubt. Did I but know the route he takes, I could avert this danger by means of preconcerted signals. The time, however, is very brief; the matter presses—information upon which I reckoned with assurance has failed me. I implore you, do not delay. Trust in my judgment,

since there is scant leisure to form your own.'

Beatrice Cope's face became whiter, and she trembled very much.

'How can I do this thing?' she said. 'We are betrothed.'

A sudden spasm of pain—almost of indignation—passed over Roger Sandiland's countenance.

'Ah! 'tis as I feared; your heart is not with us. That which touches us keenly has no hold on you. A few idle scruples, prompted by affection for this young man, outweigh with you the safety of a noble Cause. Be it so: reproaches are unavailing now. 'Tis the fault of circumstances, in part. But I said to you that there may be loss of life to-night—and of whose

life, think you?—Sir Raymond Forrest rides very forward in danger, does he not? —These gentlemen will be well-armed, and desperate.'

She lifted up her head then; the trembling childish creature, with the soft changing face, had vanished away, lost in the sorrowful yet resolute woman who had inherited an honourable spirit. Her very voice was altered, as she said, almost proudly,

'I cannot do this which you desire. I cannot break faith.'

'There was no promise?' he answered, quickly.

'What need was there of any promise? We are betrothed, as you know; his secrets, if he has any, must be my secrets

too. Listen, I pray you; indeed, I am not heartless; my inmost soul is torn in refusing what you ask of me; but sure the Cause you love—the Cause for which my father died, and my brother lives—is too noble for service such as this would be. I cannot doubt that you, who mark all things, marked my coming engagement ere it was completed; yet you spoke no word of warning—did not even reveal yourself to me—until I had given my troth to Sir Raymond Forrest, and my future life was bound to his by a sure promise. That promise I cannot recall, neither can I make it a cloak for treachery to him. He speaks freely to me, never doubting that I shall respect his confidence; and I must respect it, come what may.'

'That suffices; I urge you no further,' said Roger Sandiland. 'It appears that you have deliberately chosen to forget your own people and your father's house.'

He spoke sternly, in deep offence and disappointment; but nevertheless the words he used came to Beatrice with an assurance of strength. She clasped her hands together suddenly as she answered,

'In this case—even my own people, and my father's house.'

The final words were bravely spoken; yet, when he left her, she stood like one amazed in the wind and the rain. The ordeal—in which the true sense of honour had conquered—had been a terrible one; and now that it was past, a feeling of exhaustion and utter bewilderment began

to steal over her. She crept back to the house at last, through the shades of the gathering twilight, only desiring in her weariness to lie down in some dark place where no eyes could see her face.

Mistress Delia met her young guest with some asperity of question and rebuke; for she had reached the stage of convalescence in which a patient is apt to be jealous of any neglect on the part of hitherto devoted attendants. She did not know the history of Beatrice's absence, and had no idea that the girl had been out in the storm, which brought on the dusk sooner than usual.

'I think you might meditate upon Sir Raymond Forrest's last words in the warm parlour as well as in your own cold

chamber,' Madam Pettigrew said. 'He is not so vivacious as he was; I thought him dull company, until my anecdotes of poor Willie and Mr. Templar brightened him. 'Tis well that I can always talk, come what may.—But you look dull and spiritless as a Quaker at Christmas; and I warrant me you have forgot to order the hot elder wine for my supper.'

'Indeed, no, cousin; I remembered it,' said Beatrice, rousing herself. 'And here comes Joyce with the tray, in the nick of time to re-establish my character. But I fear I must leave you to sup alone, if you will excuse so early a disappearance. My head aches, and the lights swim before my eyes.'

So Mistress Beatrice went early to her

little bed-chamber with the oriel-window, which looked out towards fair Goodrest. She lay awake through the long hours, half stupefied by the pain across her brow and eyes, yet listening and watching for she scarce knew what.

As the grey dawning broke over the hills, she started up, imagining that she heard the clash of swords and the groan of a wounded man . . . . And when, an hour later, the household began to stir, and the sun rose ruddy and clear above the October haze, there was no more sorrowful lady in broad England or Scotland to boot, than Mistress Beatrice Cope.

All the day she was feverish and restless, flitting from place to place; fulfilling her cousin's behests as usual, yet with thoughts

far away upon the Scottish border. No speedy ending of suspense was to be looked for in those days; Beatrice knew not whether days or weeks might elapse ere she heard of her lover again.

Madam Pettigrew, as it happened, had a return of illness; and was, moreover, nervous as to the possible passage of the Earl of Mar's force, repeating many times that she wished she had bethought her to ask Sir Raymond to put Whiteoaks under military guardianship.

The afternoon was long and weary, the night wearier still. And the next day Madam Pettigrew was still very ailing; and Beatrice felt a blank depression of mind which she fancied must be the harbinger of woe.

changing her position. 'What noise is that, think you?'

Patty Joyce listened anxiously at the open window.

'Now Heaven ha' mercy, Madam Beatrice!' she whispered. 'The wild Highlanders be coming to fright and harry us!'

Sure enough, the measured tramp of men marching on foot in an unbroken order grew each moment more distinct. Sometimes it seemed lost for an instant—then it was heard again, louder than before; but there was no military music, no utterance of any word of command. Only the regular tread of many feet, in swift and silent advance, passing on through the evening shadows to some appointed bourne.

'They have turned down the hill from the high-road—they are pausing at the broken sign-post . . . Yes, they are coming up the lane past this house. Patty, is Madam Pettigrew asleep?' asked Beatrice.

'Ay, madam; in a beautiful deep sleep, and Joan be sitting by her pillow,' said Patty. 'Them wild creeturs may give us the go-by, quiet and peaceable. Heaven send she mayn't hear naught o' them and their screeching and skirling!'

With this fervent aspiration Patty made as though she would shut the window, and bar the heavy shutter across; but Beatrice signed to her to desist from her purpose, and hastily extinguished the lighted candle.

'We have not time,' she whispered. 'Let us be still.'

The whole house was open and defenceless in the twilight; but not a living thing stirred within as the unseen company marched by, and not a light twinkled at any of the windows. Madam Pettigrew slept like an infant; and Joan, her faithful guardian, sat quietly at her side. And down below Mistress Beatrice and Patty listened with bated breath to the rapid march.

'The Highlanders 'ud never be so quiet,' Patty murmured.

Then Beatrice, with one of her swift light movements, leant from the window out into the night; and as the departing file emerged from the deep shadow of the

trees into the bare strip of road beyond, the light of the rising moon struck upon mourning cloaks and sable plumes, while in the midst a long black burden was borne swiftly and noiselessly upon the shoulders of men.

Beatrice drew back into the room.

'Here are no wild Highlanders, Patty,' she said. 'Tis the passing of a funeral train.'

'Eh, dear!' said Patty, looking out in her turn. 'And who can it be they're burying, Madam Beatrice?—One of the poor gentlemen, I reckon, as has been out for King James. They'll be laying him i' the little churchyard at Goodrest, at the midnight hour; 'tis the burying-place they favour; and they will have one of their

clergy to say the service i' the old fashion. Dear, dear! I wish yon train may not be bearing Squire Templar's body home!—He be ever that forward and stirring in great matters, poor gentleman! But this may be some poor fellow that nobody knows; one of them that comes and goes from over-seas. They would bury him at Goodrest, like enough, if he was one of their following.'

Mistress Beatrice turned from the window with a long long sigh.

'You may close the shutters now,' she said. 'And, Patty, look well to the bolts and bars.'

With this she went upstairs very softly, and looked into the room where Mistress Delia lay sleeping. And afterwards she

came down again, and sought Patty in the houseplace, which seemed far more cheerful than the parlour that evening. 'Twas less lonesome, Mistress Beatrice thought, in the houseplace with the red ashes of the fire glowing warmly, and the bright pewter trenchers and mugs shining against the wall, and the hams and flitches and ropes of onions hanging from the rafters, and Patty in the chimney-corner for company, than in the parlour where there were no signs of life. So she lighted a dip-candle, and sat down with her knitting, speaking a word to Patty now and again, in hopes to beguile her into some talk of village news.

But Patty Joyce, although as eager a gossip as Madam Pettigrew herself in a

general way, was not to be enticed into any such cheerful discourse this evening. Instead of telling Mistress Beatrice Cope of weddings, christenings, blithe Harvest-Home suppers, and such like matters, her mind turned to tales of weird superstition, such as were very unlikely to be serviceable in supporting the spirits of her auditor.

Patty had come to the conclusion that the funeral train which had gone silently past Whiteoaks was but an apparition, or a presentment, given as a warning of terrors yet to come. It meant, she said, that war would soon sweep from end to end of England. She had heard of such portents before; her grandfather remembered such in the days of King Charles the Martyr

. . . . And 'twas an ill thing to be chosen to look upon such strange unchancy sights; 'twas noticed that no good came to those who saw more than mortal eyes should . . . . And Patty now began to remember that the air felt very chill and piercing as she leant out to see the departing pageant. Was Mistress Beatrice sensible of the chill, she asked?—sure, 'twas more than common, after so warm a day for the season of the year?

'I was frightened, and therefore I shivered,' said Beatrice; 'but I am certain those tramping feet belonged to men of solid flesh and blood, Patty. How regular the tread was! methinks I hear it now.—I would I knew whose body they bore in the midst,' she added, trembling.

Patty Joyce shook her stolid head, firm in her own belief.

'Nay, nay, madam,' she said, 'never trouble your head to find that out. I warrant me 'twas no new corpse, but one that lacked Christian burial, maybe, in the wild fighting days, Granfer do tell of. Eh, those were awesome days, Madam Beatrice! and 'tis like enough the ghosts of the old Ironsides are afoot now, glad to think the hurly-burly is beginning over again. Kill, slay, and harry were ever the least words in their mouths; and 'twas wonderful the gift they had for reading of their Bibles backwards. 'Tis an evil portent for the land, if the Ironsides walk in darkness, madam.'

'These men who terrified us but now

were clothed after a different fashion from that which distinguished Cromwell's Ironsides, good Patty,' said Beatrice, with a faint little smile.

But Patty had no mind to yield up her position; and she proceeded to tell one horrible story after another, in defence of her conviction, until at last, being weary with butter-making in the fore part of the day, she dozed off in the chimney corner, the horrors she recounted proving quite powerless to keep her awake.

And Mistress Beatrice continued to knit; and as she knitted it seemed to her as though her senses, little by little, did resolve themselves into that of acute hearing. She listened breathlessly, as one who

awaits a call, while Patty Joyce dozed in the chimney corner, and the fire burnt low and red. At last the cuckoo clock in the parlour struck ten, with a great whirr and vibration which could be heard all over the house; and Patty stirred then, having slept her sleep out, and knowing in her heart that 'twas bedtime and past.

And even as she moved and rubbed her eyes, quick pattering steps came round the angle of the house.

'What time be this, Madam Beatrice?' said Patty, waking up angered, because she had overslept herself. 'Fine time this for decent folks to be sitting up, a-wasting of fire and candle! And me a-nodding here, knowing naught o' the hour.'

While Patty was yet muttering to her-

self, there was a sound of light tapping upon the stout oak of the door; and Mistress Beatrice Cope rose up very pale, with the look of one who hears an expected summons which brooks no delay.

CHAPTER VIII.

THAT summons, which was very soft and low, and might have been but the beating of bare hands upon the massive door, startled Patty Joyce broad awake on the instant. She threw herself in the young lady's path, making signs to Mistress Beatrice to wait, and to be still. And Mistress Beatrice paused where she stood, with white face and dilated eyes.

But the knocking came again, yet more

vehement and more fluttered; as though some creature were beating itself against the door, eager to attract attention and gain admittance, though fearful of making overmuch noise.

And when it became clear that somebody, good or bad, was without, Patty, having regard to the lateness of the hour and the probability of supernatural visitations, was much disposed to make as though the knocking were unheard, and to creep quietly off to bed. But Mistress Beatrice prevailed upon her to depart from this prudent course; and the two peered from an upper window to see who stood before the door.

At first they could see no one; but presently a little figure stepped back from the

shadow, looking up to the window above; and Beatrice Cope, although she discerned not the face, felt more than ever certain that this summons was for her.

'Tis but a child there without, Patty,' she said. 'Maybe 'tis some poor little creature that has lost its way, and come here for help and shelter. Heaven forbid that we should leave it to wander about, all the dreary night through!'

Patty's fears were not much calmed by the sight of this lonely child. 'Twas the Phantom Child, she murmured, who comes wailing piteously to honest folks' doors o' nights; and if they take it in and cherish it, it works them grievous woe.

Mistress Beatrice, however, tried to hear as little as she might of what Patty was

saying; and she went downstairs and undid the heavy bar very cautiously. Then she opened the door a little space; and Patty Joyce stood by her staunchly, although disapproving of that which she did.

And when the door was opened, this persevering applicant proved to be only the boy Bill Lampeter, who was known at Whiteoaks as at Crowe Hall, and a score of country Granges beside. He did but crave a drink of milk and a bit to eat, he said. He had been a-foot all day, and had had nought to eat; and seeing a light burning in the houseplace, he made bold to knock and ask for what he needed.

The boy's breath was short and hurried, and his grimy face was pale and damp

with toil or hard running. He did not seek to enter, but kept glancing over his shoulder into the darkness behind him.

Beatrice sent Patty for food and drink, standing still herself in the doorway; and the maid was no sooner gone than the boy drew nearer, and spoke.

'Oh, mistress,' he said, hoarsely, 'I have been beat to-night—but I told 'em nought. The corporal he raddled my bones terrible—but I set my teeth, and I told 'un nought. I bit him when he took they shining white things o' yourn, wi' the writing; them as I could not give to Mr. Cope, the day I warned the porter at Goodrest that the redcoats was upon 'em. I had the white things safe, mistress, hid in my smock'—(he put his hand to his

breast, where the rough garment he wore was heavily quilted and closely drawn).—'And I would ha' giv' them to Mr. Cope, the first chance I got—I would, honest and true. But the scouting-party caught me; and they says, "Thee be allays running from one Grange to another, thee little ne'er-do-weel; thee can tell us what we wants to know about Goodrest in the hills."—And I were telling of 'em just what tales comed into my head, for fear of unpleasantness, mistress; when the corporal, a great rough chap, seizes hold of me, and says, says he, "'Tis all a pack o' lies, this here. Search him," he says, "and see if he carries messages or tokens." And then I fought and bit, for I know'd they'd find your bright things in my

smock; and I bit his hand nigh upon through, that I did,' said Bill, with grim satisfaction, and an oath at which poor Beatrice shuddered.

'Oh, hush!' she said. 'There is no help in swearing, boy.'

'*He* swore,' Bill replied. 'But when he got the tablets, he were fine and pleased. And he said, "This is a stag of ten, my boys; and should he snuff the breeze too soon we have means to keep him where he is till morning. Hold that little viper fast," says he, "and for your lives don't let him give us the slip."—So one of the troopers took me behind him on his horse, with a rope round my body, drawn cruel tight at first. And I panted, and groaned,

and made as though he were killing of me; and after a bit he slacked the rope a little, so as I could put my head down and gnaw it through in the dark. And at the dip of a valley, where the shadow was deep under the trees, I slipped off quiet-like into the long grass. He knew the rope was loose in a minute, and he snapped his pistol; but the covert was good, and I crope into the heart of a holler tree covered o'er wi' ivy. I bided there, till they was tired o' hunting round.—But oh, mistress, the poor gentleman at Goodrest is undone!—They talked together while the trooper were making me fast upon his horse; and I heared a word now and again, for I listened with all my might.

There were but four of 'em; and they said they weren't strong enough to surprise Goodrest, but must ride back to quarters for help. And as we went past Grantford Farm, the corporal called a halt; and one held his horse while he went in and spoke with the farmer. And, mistress, Hugh Stone of Grantford is known for a bitter Whig . . . . And presently Hugh of Grantford comes out, and his little brother with him; and the boy had that as you wrote upon—that as they took from me—in his hand. And the corporal says, looking over his shoulder quick and short, "Does he understand?" says he. "Oh, aye," says Hugh of Grantford, "he understands fine." And I could see wee Jock did not like the job he were put upon;

and I made a face at him from ahint the trooper's back, and he liked it less nor ever then.'

'What job, Bill?'

Bill Lampeter looked in amazement at this beautiful, terrified lady who did not understand.

'Don't 'ee see?' he said. 'Jock o' Grantford were to take your writing to Goodrest, and play upon the gentleman there, to keep him biding till the redcoats come. What were it as you wrote down that day, mistress?'

As in a flash of painful memory Beatrice saw the dainty tablets once more, with words traced upon them in a hand rendered somewhat unsteady by the slow pace of the sorrel horse—a hand unmistak-

haste. 'Quick wits, save the mark! duller, I think, can scarce have had a chance of wrecking a fair enterprise.—When the door is once opened, your part in this play begins. You must lead ces messieurs, whose intellects, let us hope, move with British slowness and deliberation, through the house, trusting naught to our excellent Ursula's fertility of resource. Will you wait a moment with Beatrice here? I will rejoin you instantly.'

They were by this time in a small octagonal hall, which Beatrice had not entered during her brief stay at Goodrest. The part of the house in which she now found herself was strange to her; but her companions evidently knew it well.

Charles Cope sprang up a narrow wind-

ing stair at headlong speed; Agnes and Beatrice waited below, clasping each other's hands.

The hall was lighted by eight lancet windows, filled with painted glass; and in all her terror and anxiety Beatrice watched the gorgeous reflections which were cast on the floor and walls, as the moonbeams streamed through the richly-hued panes. Her mind worked in a curious involuntary way, as though it belonged to some other person who had nothing else to do but endeavour to discern the subjects depicted in each window through which the radiance struck.

'Twas upon a figure of Hope, leaning on her anchor, with a beautiful stedfast face, that Beatrice was gazing when she heard

the quick reverberation of horses' feet at a trot. There was a sudden pause—a word of command sharply spoken; the well-known summons 'Open, in the King's name!'

And at that moment Charles Cope dashed down the stairs, thrusting a packet, hastily wrapped together, into the breast of his coat.

'Caught!' he said. 'Mistress Agnes, does the plot hold good? How shall we do?'

Beatrice scarcely heard the murmured colloquy which followed, so intent was she upon the sounds without.

Presently Agnes said,

'The outside stairs, Mr. Cope—the pleasance—the path which winds by the

fish-ponds, keeping to the left among the walnut-trees. 'Tis a great hazard——'

'But there is a chance,' young Cope replied. 'And you—have you nerve to remain, and play the part we agreed upon?'

'Surely, surely. Heaven speed you! Now—now; this way.'

Oh, the painful effort of that toilsome ascent, to the summit of the winding dizzy stair towards which Agnes beckoned! Round and round they went, up the cork-screw windings, with occasional glimpses into depths below towards which Beatrice dared not look, lest her head, already light with excitement and fatigue, should begin to swim and her limbs should fail.

Agnes' parting whisper—'Courage, dear

heart!'—still sounded in her ears as she climbed, following Charlie, whose pace might not have been quite so rapid had he known with what agony of nervous effort his sister toiled after him.

The tower was high—higher than any other part of Goodrest; and from its summit one could see into Scotland. As the brother and sister reached the top, the cool night air, intensified into that sharp penetrating cold which comes before the dawning, beat upon their faces with reviving force; the steps became easier towards the close; and Charles Cope helped his sister through an aperture which a door may once have filled, out upon the parapet whence by daylight a glorious view can be discerned. They saw

no view then; only the sky glittering with a myriad stars, the pale moon waning towards her setting, the dark clumps of trees dotting garden and park.

'Now, Beatrice, for the test of your courage!' said Charlie, in that mirthful voice of his. 'Tis but a few steps—awkward, I grant you, but my hand is sure and strong—and we are upon the leads before the window of my room. From thence the stairs are broad and easy; we shall baffle these gentry to admiration, yet. —Stay, let me go before you; you will need help.'

'Twas indeed a perilous scramble, and one which by daylight, with time to think, and a mind at leisure to consider the danger of a false step, Beatrice Cope could

not have brought herself to essay. But now she swung herself from point to point, clinging to tough ivy strands, and reaching forward towards Charlie's helping hand.

The young man had his own misgivings; he knew well enough that the slightest accident might precipitate them both into the depths below. Once a bat flew from the ivy into his very face; and his footing, for a second, was well-nigh gone. And, even then, he thought not of his sister—thought not of himself—but only of those papers and that money lying upon his heart, the loss of which would be fatal to 'The Cause.' But he recovered his balance, with bleeding hands and wrenched joints; and lifted his sister down the last broken

steps, speaking in low tones to reassure her, though he felt no great assurance himself. For they were in a very precarious position, now that they had reached this terrace-walk upon the leads.

The window of the room Charlie had occupied, which looked out upon this walk, was rendered narrow by stone mullions, so that a return to the house was impossible by that means. The only hope of escape lay in a successful descent to the pleasance; and as they paused upon the leads, keeping carefully in shadow of a projecting buttress, they heard the tread of a sentry below, pacing to and fro upon the paved walk.

Mr. Cope felt the dispassionate admiration of a soldier for an enemy who has been quick and prompt in his measures.

'They have us in a trap,' he whispered, drawing his sword; 'but all is not lost, while good steel remains.'

'Hush!—one moment!' said Beatrice, breathlessly.

Some person had approached the sentry, and a few words were exchanged in an undertone. The low, gruff voices ascended clearly enough to where Charlie and Beatrice stood.

'A queer old nest this, brother,' said the man first on duty. 'Haunted, eh? These old rookeries mostly are.'

'Haunted with Jacobites, Tom Pierce,' growled the other.

'Didst ever see a ghost, theeself?' asked the first speaker.

'Not I, in faith.'

'My father did—here, at Goodrest,' said number one, evidently ill at ease. 'He was gardener here afore I were born. Many's the tale he told us little 'uns of a lady in white, that passes across the pleasance-ground to the ponds as the day breaks, and is lost in the water. 'Tis the ghost of one as drownded herself for love of a wicked French lord, in the days before the Restoration; and she walks still—that a does. When father were nigh upon his latter end, I ast him were the tale true? "Aye, Tom," he says, "'tis true as gospel; and if you bide underneath the old tower at Goodrest and watch for the dawning, happen thee may see her pass," says he.—But I ne'er tried it. I weren't that set upon seeing ghostesses, not I.—Thee'lt

share my watch, brother? Two men be better nor one, in these unchancy places.'

'Aye,' replied the comrade thus appealed to. 'I will but fetch my weapon from the corporal yonder, and be with'ee in a trice.'

He passed on; and the brother and sister knew that their last chance had come. With the speed of lightning Beatrice slipped off the dark cloak which enveloped her.

A faint grey streak was beginning to shew in the east, and a cock crew, welcoming the dawn with shrill salute, as the slim figure of Mistress Beatrice Cope glided down the stone steps, noiseless and swift. Her light gown shewed white in the darkness; her steps were not heard. She passed

the astonished sentry like a flash of dim, mysterious radiance; impalpable, unearthly, as the dawn itself . . . Away, over the frosty grass towards the fish-ponds . . . aye, aye! 'twas even so with the shadowy lady of Goodrest, who drowned herself for love of the wicked French lord long ago.

Honest Tom Pierce felt his hair rise upon his head, as the ghostly visitant floated past his post; and a cold dew broke out upon his forehead while he turned his head to watch the course of the apparition.

Of all superstitions, those imbibed in childhood live longest and die hardest; and Tom Pierce had trembled at his father's tale of the Goodrest lady, when

he was a little urchin with a curly head, hiding his face on his mother's knee.

But Tom, although his belief in the marvellous knew no bounds, was brave as a lion where aught of flesh and blood was concerned; and when a dark figure, muffled and disguised, sought to follow the white lady, he struck at it at once with a good will and scant ceremony. Tom, unfortunately, had never heard that the ghost of the wicked French lord followed that of his victim to the scene of her last wild, fatal act. More practical ideas occurred to his mind at once, as he grappled with a strong young man completely armed.

The sentry was a more powerful man than Charles Cope, as to thews and sinews,

his build was heavier, his grip that of an iron vice. But the Jacobite gentleman was desperate; and there is no strength so irresistible as that born of desperation. Also, he was prepared for the encounter, whereas Tom Pierce, for the instant, was off his guard.

The struggle between them was almost instantaneous, and absolutely silent, the sentry having no power to let off his pistol or to sound an alarm . . .

Three minutes later, Charles Cope was at his sister's side once more, and Tom Pierce lay motionless, staring up at the sky with fast-glazing eyes, while a dull crimson stain spread slowly over the grey stones of the paved walk beneath 'The Lady's Tower.'

CHAPTER X.

THE brother and sister threaded the mazes of the pleasance, passed beyond the fish-ponds, struck into the orchard, and found the pony tied where Beatrice had left her, but trembling and very cold.

'Will he raise an alarm?' asked Beatrice, as her brother, panting from recent exertion, muffled her once more in the dark cloak.

'*He* will not,' young Cope replied.

'The other will—when he comes back. Let us hope that he may be delayed. We must make the best use we can of a short start. Thank Heaven, I know the windings of these lanes indifferent well.'

'And Grizzel is very fleet,' said Beatrice. 'Can you keep up with her, think you?'

'She may trot her fastest,' he answered, laconically; and he encouraged the pony after the manner of men who know the equine nature well, and treat every horse they have to do with as they might a human friend.

And then in the grey dawning a flight began which Mistress Beatrice Cope was like to remember to the latest hour she had to live. They dared not advance straight upon Whiteoaks, but made a long

détour, circling among the recesses of the stern Northumbrian dales.

The eastern sky turned from grey to red, from red to golden yellow; the birds twittered in the hedgerows, and then sang out blithely to greet a new day. And the piercing cold of the daybreak hour lost something of its intense keenness, as the sun climbed the edge of the horizon, the earliest rays falling upon that lofty tower of Goodrest in the hills.

At sunrise Charlie Cope paused to let the pony breathe, and her rider rest; while he recruited his own powers a little by leaning upon a gate drinking in the fresh morning breeze. And he said, in a voice somewhat hoarse yet mirthful too, that the pursuit was baffled, thanks to Grizzel's

speed, and the manifold windings of the lanes. And he hummed the air his sister used to sing,

> 'Pack, clouds, away, and welcome day,
> With night we banish sorrow.'

He was glad and light-hearted now, giving small thought to the manner of their escape, since 'twas like to end well for himself and those he served.

But upon Mistress Beatrice Cope came all the tremor, all the weariness, all the agony of the silent hours gone by; and she bowed her head and wept in the glory of the rising sun, her delicate frame shaken by sobs she could not check.

Then the young man blamed himself for not having seen her exhaustion sooner; and he brought water as best he could from a

fresh little spring which bubbled forth from the hillside, calling himself many hard names the while. He sprinkled her forehead with the cold drops, and made her drink from a large leaf dexterously twisted into a cup, loosening her hood and supporting her with a hand as gentle as a woman's, though 'twas the same which had dealt Tom Pierce his death-blow.

And Beatrice roused herself to conquer the passing weakness, sitting erect in her saddle once more, and pushing back her drooping hair, all straight and dank with the dews of night.

'Charlie, did you kill him?' she asked faintly, when the first sip of water had done its reviving work.

'Him! Whom do you mean?—Oh, the

sentry yonder!—In good truth I can scarcely say, sweet one. 'Twas no moment for measuring force,' he answered, lightly and carelessly. 'The point of importance is that you and I find ourselves here, safe and sound.—Beatrice, we are closer to Whiteoaks than you, maybe, are aware of. You have but to hold straight on till you pass yon clump of trees, and you will see the gate into the West Croft scarce twenty paces from you.'

'But you! what will you do?—Come with me, Charlie; we can surely find some shelter wherein you may lie close.'

'No, no; that were treating Madam Pettigrew too unfairly. If she harbours me under these circumstances, it must be

with her own knowledge and goodwill. See, I will remain hidden in this wood for the present; and, should Mistress Delia incline to give me a night's lodging, you can send that mal-adroit young marplot, Master Bill, with a message when the shadows lengthen. I warrant me you will find him skulking about, to know the upshot of this night's work.—And hark in your ear, Beatrice. Send me food at sunset, if you rob larder and buttery, hen-roost and dairy. I shall have an appetite, do not doubt.'

'May I not despatch the boy sooner? You will be famished,' she said.

He laughed gaily.

'You think a mighty deal of a day's fast, pretty sugar-plum that you are! No, not

an hour sooner; we must run no unnecessary risks.'

Then he added, in a tone which became suddenly tender and earnest,

'You are a brave lady, little Beatrice, to have been nourished to womanhood among Whigs and Hanoverians!—A brave lady, upon my honour!'

And with these words still sounding in her ears, Mistress Beatrice Cope rode through the gate into the West Croft, unfastened the saddle from Grizzel's back, and turned the creature loose with many caresses from weary little hands, to pick up her juicy breakfast from the rich autumn grass. She put away the saddle in its accustomed place; and, as she crossed the courtyard after doing this, she met one

of the men employed in Madam Pettigrew's service, just coming in to his day's work.

'The top o' the morning to 'ee, mistress,' he said, staring somewhat at the wan girl, whose garments hung about her damp and limp.

'Jesse,' said Beatrice, knowing that he had seen and marked too much, and would presently discover the pony's condition; 'will you look to poor Grizzel, in the West Croft, before anyone else comes about the place? She is hot and overridden; she has done hard service to-night. She needs to be rubbed down, and comforted with a warm mash. Will you do me this service? I know you can keep counsel.'

She drew out her little silk purse, and

held it towards Jesse Ford : but he made no motion to take the gift, merely looking at her with grave pitying eyes, in which there was no lack of respect.

'Your bidding 'ull be done, Mistress Beatrice,' he said. 'I will look to Grizzel, poor beastie; and I will keep a still tongue in my head, likewise. I baint made i' the fashion o' they women-folk, as must clatter all day, whether or no.—Heaven ha' mercy on thee!' he muttered, as he turned away.

Then Beatrice crept to the threshold of the house; and Patty Joyce had the door open in a trice, not knowing whether to laugh or to weep at sight of her.

'I was in time, Patty,' poor Beatrice whispered. 'All is well, so far.—And

now let me lie down and be still awhile—I am wearied out.'

Patty Joyce half-led, half-carried the exhausted girl to Madam Pettigrew's guest-chamber; and there Beatrice fell into a deep dreamless sleep which was almost like a swoon. She left herself in Patty's hands; and Patty was quite equal to the occasion.

A tale of a headache accounted for the non-appearance of the young lady in Madam Pettigrew's apartment; and so the long hours passed by in tranquillity, until at four o'clock Beatrice awoke, with a terribly confused sense of peril, and a great dread of having overslept herself. She felt quite angered to think that she could sleep, while Charlie was still in-

secure; and she rose and dressed herself as quickly as aching limbs and a dizzy head would allow.

Cold water and a new toilette refreshed her greatly; a cup of strong soup, which watchful Patty presently brought, strengthened Mistress Beatrice more and more.—Yet she looked but the shadow of the girl who came to Whiteoaks, riding on a pillion behind the old groom from Crowe Hall; and Mistress Delia gave a little cry at sight of her, when she entered the parlour in time to pour out the dish of tea for which her hostess was growing impatient.

'Why, what has happened to you, child?' Mistress Delia said, sharply. 'You leave me to myself for hours, though you know that to be alone gives

me the vapours; and at last, when I am worn out with waiting for my tea, you come in, with your face the colour of skim-milk, and black rings about your eyes. What business have you with headaches, at your age?—Dear heart of mine! When I was nineteen I had heard of such things, to be sure; but as to having a headache on my own account, I would as soon have thought of wearing my grandmother's cap.'

'I have had ill news, cousin,' said Beatrice, pouring out a dish of tea, and bringing it, yellow with the richest cream, to Mistress Delia's side.

'Aye, aye,' said the elder lady, pettishly, sipping her tea with favour however; 'ill news of Sir Raymond Forrest, I'll be bound.

Either he has had his little finger broken in a Border foray, or he has seen brighter eyes than yours among the Lowland lassies; and in either case no common lamentation will serve the turn, I warrant me.—Dear dear! there is a vast deal of folly in this world; and a girl engaged to be married has no more sense left than might creditably equip a guinea-hen. —But why do you not tell me what has happened, instead of spoiling my dish of tea with dismal looks? Is it a broken finger, or a broken troth, this time?'

'Neither, Cousin Delia,' said Beatrice, gently, 'I have heard no word from Sir Raymond Forrest since you saw him last; pray Heaven he be safe and well, and

better at ease than I am!—My trouble has a different source. And, now that you are somewhat invigorated, I have a story to tell, and a petition to make. Will you hear me kindly, dear cousin?'

'Aye, child,' said Mistress Delia, with far less acerbity; for the manner of this confidence touched her.

And when Beatrice drew a low seat close to her cousin's elbow chair, and began to tell her of Charlie, dead to his sister for years, and now near at hand yet in hourly peril, Mistress Delia yielded to the spell of the earnest eyes and voice, and understood, for the first time in her life, maybe, somewhat of the strength of that tie between brother and sister which

often withstands all parting, all separation.

Thus it came to pass that Mistress Delia Pettigrew, who was by no means a courageous or an unselfish woman, was wrought upon to perform an act which might not improbably bring with it inconvenient penalties, and which certainly exposed her to the strain of much nervous apprehension.

She empowered Beatrice to send a message to young Mr. Cope, saying that Whiteoaks, and such shelter as it could afford, were heartily at his service. And when Beatrice, in her gladness, and thankfulness, and passionate relief, covered her cousin's hands with grateful kisses, Mistress

Delia, who had given but little love, and received less, during her lifetime, felt a strange thrill in her veins, a strange glow at her heart.

'There, that will do, child,' she said. 'I am a foolish woman to yield to your wishes; and your brother, I make bold to say, is a mighty unprofitable young man, for all the coil there is about him and his safety.—But as to a night's lodging and a good meal, sure no one can blame me for giving that measure of relief to a poor gentleman in distress. I ask not his politics; remember, Beatrice, I ask no questions, and I know naught.'

Beatrice was thankful and overjoyed at this happy result of her pleading; but she knew little peace until Bill Lampeter, who,

as Charlie had surmised, was found lurking in his resting-place, the barn, returned, from his embassage bearing word that 'the gentleman' would follow presently.

CHAPTER XI.

AND 'the gentleman' came, as the dusk grew deeper—somewhat hollow-eyed and gaunt from his fast and his fatigue, and with clothes much in need of brushing and drying. He had lain all day among the rushes in a marshy place too soft to bear the tread of horses' feet; and, as he lay upon his islet in the midst of the black quagmire, he had

several times heard the voices of the soldiers sent to seek him.

He seemed surprised and slightly disappointed to hear that no search-party had yet explored Whiteoaks; and Beatrice began to regret the reprieve of which she had previously been glad.

'You see it would have been very convenient had these fellows looked in while the old lady here had a clear conscience,' said Charlie. 'Now she will let the cat out of the bag, to a dead certainty.—Well, my stay must be the shorter, Beatrice. But food, and wine, and a few hours' sleep will make a new man of me; and I shall soon reach the main body of ours, who should be well-advanced on their way into England ere now.'

'Charlie,' his sister whispered, holding his arm, 'have you heard of any disaster upon the Border?'

'No,' he said, looking at her with some surprise. 'There was a sudden change of plans, on the part of those who meant to cross, which was signalled to us at Goodrest, and caused me to linger there longer than I intended. But there was no disaster, that I know of. We suppose they had news that the soldiers from Berwick were watching the ford they meant to use, further up the Tweed.'

'Then how did Mr. Templar meet his death? The porter at Goodrest told me the soldiers cut off a party who were seeking to join the Earl of Mar from the English *side*; and he said that Mr. Templar and

several others fell in the struggle. Oh, is it true?—is it true?'

'Why, you shake like an aspen leaf, Beatrice! 'Tis as true as most of Job Eccles' information; that is to say, the story bears some slight resemblance to the actual fact. But there was no struggle, as it happened. Poor Templar's party, finding themselves over-matched, and being very anxious to get peaceably into Scotland without waste of time or blood, made a circuit, and evaded the Hanoverian troops. They had some rough and hasty riding, however; and Mr. Templar's horse slipped in a certain rocky descent. He was thrown, and died on the spot. His body lay a night and a day in a shepherd's hut; and then some of his following managed to convey *it home to* Goodrest.'

'By night?'

'By night, chiefly.—Do not look so pale upon this, Beatrice; his was a soldier's death after all, though it came at an ill moment. Could he but have seen the result of his toil!—In the triumph-hour he, and many another like him, will be missed. This will be a blow to Roger Sandiland; they were comrades before either of us were born.'

His face grew set and gloomy, as he looked into the wood-fire upon the hearth. If he read his fortune in the glowing ashes, 'twas scarce a bright one; although he spoke with a confident voice of 'the coming triumph.'

'We need that union which is strength,' he said, presently; 'and poor Templar, and

one or two like him, had a glimmering notion how to promote it. The King can ill spare him; and his loss will be more felt, I fear, as time goes on.'

Beatrice did not interrupt her brother's meditations for several minutes. She stood by his side, a dainty lady in her pretty, well-finished dress, with knots of primrose ribbon on her breast and in her hair: and she too looked into the fire, but her eyes were moist with an exceeding thankfulness.

After awhile she looked up, pressing the arm upon which her hand rested.

'Come, now,' she said. 'Cousin Delia grows impatient.'

He started, with an affectation of theatrical dismay.

'What! must I be presented to the châtelaine now, in this sorry plight?'

'You must, sir. The one misdeed which Cousin Delia cannot overlook is the want of consideration which keeps her waiting.'

'Have you no proper pride in your brother, madam? Let me but see what service a bath and a clothes'-brush can render me; and then, although every briar in my thorny refuge has taken ungenerous toll in the shape of a morsel of cloth, and my charming visnomy is embellished by scratches long and deep, while the state of my hands would somewhat discredit a ploughman, I will do my best to captivate the lady on whose goodwill my safety much depends.'

But Beatrice would accept no excuses, and permit no delay. She ushered him into the parlour where Mistress Delia sat; and indeed there was no lack of pride in her voice as she presented this worn wayfarer to her hostess.

Mistress Delia Pettigrew saw a young man who, in spite of all present disadvantages, bore a stronger resemblance to that fair Lucy Hunter of Crowe Hall who had been a contemporary of her own years ago, than his sister was ever like to do.

His hair—no longer hidden beneath the close peruke, once the distinguishing mark of a gentleman—shewed the same golden-flaxen light which had been reckoned among Mistress Lucy Hunter's chief

beauties. His cheeks were too thin, and his lips too firmly set, to carry out the likeness thus begun; but there was more of the Hunter than the Cope in his appearance, while in that of his sister the Cope traits predominated over the Hunter characteristics.

Yet the likeness between the two was strong and unmistakable, as they stood side by side in the firelight. And when Charlie Cope began to speak, a certain similarity of intonation and pronunciation was very manifest. His voice was the masculine complement of Beatrice's soft full tones; when he addressed his sister and she replied, their relationship became at once evident.

Despite all fears, Madam Pettigrew

began to think Charles Cope's presence in her house an agreeable incident. He knew well how to reassure her on the score of danger; how to please by his ready courtesy and tact, and beguile the time with tales of adventure and travel, such as quiet ladies love to hear. When he returned to the parlour, refreshed by a comfortable repast, and such improvement of dress as was possible for him, Madam Pettigrew yielded herself immediately to the influence of the pleasant spell he was able to exert.

And Beatrice too, earnestly desiring that the evening should pass off well, and much relieved by the removal of some secret load from her mind, became wondrous gay and blithe, and lost her pale and

weary looks. Her eyes shone like stars; her talk sparkled with pretty mirthfulness. She played upon the spinet in the corner by the oriel window, and sang to amuse her cousin and brother—glad songs, for the most part; for Mistress Beatrice Cope loved not pathetic ditties such as Anne and Bessie Hunter were wont to choose, but took to herself those which breathed of the fresh woodlands and the joy of the spring.

And so she sang the songs she liked on a dark evening in autumn, when the leaves were shivering down beneath the touch of the first sharp frost, and the icy breath of coming winter might be felt already, lowering the pulse of life in the aged and the feeble. She sang with all her heart in the tones of her beautiful

voice, as one who snatches a happy hour, defying the coming storms of Fate.

And even while Beatrice Cope sang thus at Whiteoaks, beguiling the hours of all their dread and fear, old Madam Hunter awoke from a doze in the White Parlour at Crowe Hall, with a strange tremor and faintness at her heart. She had been failing for some days, suddenly feeling all the weight of her years; all the accumulated fatigue of the thoughts, the plans, the joys, the sorrows, which make up the burden of a long life.

Madam Hunter's life had been full of prosperity and honour; but now, in the failure of her powers, her mind reverted once more to the old sources of grief, and she thought little of the son and daughter-

in-law whom she loved, and the grandchildren whom she saw around her, because her faculties were engrossed by Lucy's sorrows—Lucy, who had ceased to suffer anything on earth many years ago.

Madam Hunter sent for the Squire to her apartment; and when he came, besought and commanded him to help his sister. Lucy needed help, she said; 'twas an ill day whereupon Charles Cope crossed the threshold of Crowe Hall. And she talked wildly on, until her son succeeded in recalling the blank years to her mind—the years which had faded like a dream.

Then she shivered a little, and leant back in her easy-chair, saying that in truth 'twas very odd, but she surely fancied

some great misfortune had newly come upon daughter Lucy.

And when the Squire spoke of Beatrice at Whiteoaks, the name seemed to stir no association of ideas. Granny did not refer to her own unwillingness to let Beatrice go there; and did not express any wish for the girl's return. But the Squire and 'young madam' said to each other that if Granny continued in this poor way, Mistress Delia Pettigrew must give up Beatrice's company in a few days' time.

All too soon the pleasant evening ended at Whiteoaks. Mistress Delia forgot her invalidism as well as her fears; and sat up to what was reckoned a very late and fashionable hour by Patty, Joan, and Eliza. The coming of young Mr. Cope

made a wonderful stir in the household; the three hand-maidens were banded together to protect his retreat with all the weapons of female subterfuge and art.

They told amazing stories to account for the presence of a man in the house, when Jesse Ford entered the kitchen without ceremony, and surprised Joan with a pair of riding-boots, much encrusted with the black mud of a morass, in her hands. Jesse had no business to come into their kitchen without leave asked, they said to each other—for all the world as if the place belonged to him! He took upon himself as though he were master and more; and he but an outdoor serving-man!

In fact they attacked Jesse with their

nimble tongues, and showed a sudden determination to pick a quarrel with him upon any grounds, or none; and then it transpired that Joan was extending surreptitious hospitality to a stout young farmer of her acquaintance, whose horse had floundered in crossing Gunderby moor.

Poor Joan would never have dreamt of committing such a breach of domestic trust as the harbouring of a friend 'unbeknown' to Mistress Delia; but she supported her part well, and assumed the onus of a fault she would have scorned. And Patty and Eliza backed her up, performing a very pretty little scene for Jesse Ford's benefit, and seeming to let slip by accident words which were really inten-

tional, and devised for his special misleading.

Yet through all this Jesse, who was observant and shrewd, suspected that a different explanation than the one vouchsafed him might have more truth in it; and he pondered over his meeting with Mistress Beatrice Cope in the farm-yard at sunrise, and the condition in which he subsequently found Grizzel.

Madam Beatrice and the pony had both been upon some night-errand, Jesse knew. And he altogether declined to believe that tale which the three maids had worked up into such a fair semblance of probability. He said nothing to them; but he thought a great deal; and the next morning at

breakfast-time he contrived to cross the flower-garden wherein no business of his lay, and to take one momentary survey of the parlour as he went by the window.

'Now Heaven pity her, poor lassie!' he muttered to himself, thinking of Mistress Beatrice Cope as he trudged upon his way. 'She comes o' Jacobite kin; I doubt she's neither true nor faithful to other folk. Sir Raymond 'ull have a bonny bargain of her, I'm thinking, wi' her pliskies over hill and dale by moonlight.—But 'tis no matter for a wise man to stir in, as loves to sit quiet by his own ingle-nook. My granfer did use to say:

> 'Who mells wi' what another do's
> Had best go home and shoe his goose.'

And with this sapient scrap of ancient philosophy, Jesse hushed his curiosity to rest.

CHAPTER XII.

CHARLES COPE had seen the man pass the window, and had noticed that he looked in, as of intention. He asked some question concerning this passer-by; and Beatrice, speaking the more strongly to silence her own misgivings, assured him that their secret was safe with Jesse Ford. She told her brother how Jesse had met her on her return from Goodrest, and had groomed

and fed poor Grizzel. Her explanation was less satisfactory to Charlie than to herself; but he thought it best to shew no doubtfulness, since information obtained from Bill Lampeter determined him to remain at Whiteoaks until dark.

Bill had crept into the house in the early dawn, to bring Mr. Cope word that the country was up, and redcoats riding hither and thither in search of a gentleman of much importance, who was known to have escaped from Goodrest with treasonable papers in his possession; wherefore 'twas only under cover of night that the object of so much attention might hope to elude observation and pursuit.

Madam Pettigrew promised her kinsman the loan of her horse Whitestar to

help him over the first dozen miles; after which Whitestar was to be left at a certain small hostelry in the hills, to be well cared for, and returned to his mistress when opportunity served.

Poor Madam Pettigrew, though she valued Whitestar, was chiefly anxious that this return should not be made too quickly, or in any compromising manner. However, Charlie's gay confident talk was by degrees producing a great effect upon her mind; and she was fast assuming the triumph of the Jacobite cause to be a foregone conclusion.

And indeed at that moment all promised fairly; though young Cope himself knew of many hidden rocks on which the party, never too united, were likely

enough to split into a thousand shivers.

To have decided on a plan was a relief to Charlie and Beatrice. They had now nothing to do but to wait until the shadows lengthened, and he might with least risk pursue his journey into Scotland. When, and under what circumstances, they would meet again, they knew not; and the uncertainty and peril of their present situation gave importance to each word which passed between them.

They talked much of their parents, and of Aunt Marjorie; of that house in the City of London, too, of which Charlie's remembrance was clearer than his sister's. But of the present, and of the future, they scarcely spoke.

More than once Charlie looked at

Beatrice very earnestly, and she fancied him about to speak of Sir Raymond Forrest and the proposed marriage which she knew to be exceedingly distasteful to her brother; but each time he seemed to change his mind, and the words she dreaded to hear were not uttered. Maybe he was loth to mar the last hours they might spend together with controversy such as this.

They were sitting in the south parlour towards twelve of the clock, Beatrice engaged at her embroidery-frame in the window, and Charlie leaning back in a large chair in the more shadowy part of the room, screened by the folds of a curtain, the high carved woodwork of the spinet, and his sister's figure, from the

glance of too curious eyes, when Patty Joyce bounced into the room in trepidation and haste.

'Oh, Madam Beatrice! dear heart alive!' she cried. 'Do but come to the attic window—the window of the apple-loft, madam. Heaven send my eyes may be mistaken! but I fear me their sight is over clear and true. The soldiers are coming here, as straight as they can ride. Mr. Cope will be taken, and my poor mistress will die of fright!'

Patty was almost beside herself with terror, for which indeed she had good grounds. From the pretty attic window, half-veiled in trailing creepers, Charlie and Beatrice saw the dreaded approach. The troopers, in their red coats and buff

belts, were pausing at the cross-roads, as the funeral party which bore Mr. Templar's body home had paused the evening before last. And while the brother and sister exchanged glances of mute consultation, Madam Pettigrew herself entered the apple-loft, having climbed the stairs quite actively, all her illness forgotten in the overwhelming consciousness of grave peril.

Charles Cope was calm, alert, and ready; but his knowledge of the house and grounds of Whiteoaks was not great. Prudence had kept him from exploration during the hours he had spent there, since chance encounters such as Jesse Ford had succeeded in compassing were not to be risked.

'Shall I make a dash for the meadows?' he said, in a low tone to Beatrice.

'No, no!' she whispered. 'We are not sure of the man Ford. If he has betrayed us——'

'The earths will be stopped. I see,' the young man replied. 'To leave the house will but precipitate catastrophe. Is there no cellar?—no secret chamber?—no disused chimney?—wherein one might have a chance to lie hid?—Cousin Delia, I am grieved beyond measure to have brought this discomfiture upon you. I know not whether an honourable surrender were not best.'

But Mistress Delia Pettigrew had risen above herself at this moment of crisis.

'No, kinsman,' she said, firmly. 'Such

protection as Whiteoaks can give to a gentleman in distress shall not be wanting. If they find you, and take you, the will of Heaven be done!—but we will do our part. It shall never be said that Delia Pettigrew delivered up a fugitive into the hand of the enemy.—Patty, quick, girl, for your life! You know the house from attic to cellar. What can we do? Where can we conceal Mr. Cope?'

Patty Joyce wrung her hands, and wept. Each place she suggested seemed more hopeless than the last. When she proposed the great copper in the wash-house, Charlie Cope shook his head, and laughed.

'You are at the end of your resources, Patty, my girl,' he said. 'This will be no

careless search.—Could we but manage something of a disguise!'

His eyes wandered to Madam Pettigrew's lofty headgear and imposing hoop, and then sought Beatrice's face once more.

'Could I personate my cousin's anxious sister, come to be with her in her sickness?' he said.

But across the mind of Mistress Beatrice Cope a brave inspiration had flashed; and, although her face was pale, her eyes were shining with renewed hope.

'Brother!' she cried, 'I have it!—Do but trust me, and I will manage this matter. Come quickly—quickly!—down to the south parlour again.'

'She is crazy; that child is crazy!' said

poor Mistress Delia. 'The south parlour, forsooth? why, that is in the very forefront of the peril.'

'Nevertheless, therein shall be our security,' said Beatrice; and, seeing her strangely urgent and eager, her brother and cousin gave way to her.

Five minutes later all was perfectly quiet at Whiteoaks. Joan was making an apple-tart in the kitchen; Patty was rolling up butter in the dairy; Eliza was gathering savoury herbs in the garden near the back door. And Madam Pettigrew sat in her easy chair in the south parlour, with her knitting-work in hand, and the latest news-letter upon a little stand at her elbow; while Mistress Beatrice Cope was seated on the music-stool

before the spinet, whiling marvellous sweet music from the worn heart of that ancient instrument. The spinet stood a little space from the wall, at right angles with one of the windows, so that the face of the musician was towards the centre of the room.

Mistress Beatrice wore a flowing sacque of primrose silk, the train depending from her shoulders as the manner of the time was; and the shining folds of her drapery filled the dusky corner with light. She looked wondrous fair and gracious as she sat there in her place, a soft pink colour in her cheeks, and carolling as gaily as any bird.

Mistress Beatrice, as it chanced, was singing thus when Eliza, reasonably flus-

tered, but not overmuch alarmed, appeared at the door of the south parlour bearing a message from one 'Colonel Willoughby.'

Colonel Willoughby begged to present his respectful compliments to Mistress Delia Pettigrew; and, although loth to intrude upon her, requested the honour of a brief interview, on business of importance.

Mistress Delia shrank and demurred a little; sent her compliments to Colonel Willoughby, and regretted that the feeble state of her health prohibited her from receiving any visitors. Would he be good enough to communicate with her through her servant?

Upon this the Colonel made known the

fact that he was under orders to search Whiteoaks, and to attach the person of a certain political offender who was believed to be in hiding on the premises. He was very courteous—very anxious to declare that he knew such concealment would be perpetrated without connivance on the part of Madam Pettigrew; and Mistress Delia judged it discreet to accede to his re-iterated request to see her, which, indeed, she could not well decline to grant. The Colonel, it appeared, must enter each room at Whiteoaks ere his duty would be done.

Colonel Willoughby stepped into the south parlour, a grave man with grey eyebrows, a weather-beaten face, and upright military carriage. He bowed pro-

foundly to Mistress Delia, and also to the young lady at the spinet, who acknowledged his courtesy by a very graceful inclination of her head.

The interior of the apartment impressed the Colonel favourably; these two ladies, seated each at her occupations, looked very unlikely to be engaged in treasonable practices. He hastened to explain that he had no wish to annoy Madam Pettigrew in her own house; that a disagreeable charge was laid upon him, from which he would gladly be free. But Madam had doubtless heard that warrants were out for the arrest of a person specially obnoxious to Government, who had made his escape from Goodrest with much daring and audacity.

'Indeed, sir, I heard not of it,' said Mis-

tress Delia. 'Or, if I heard, I marked not. I stir little abroad; the news of the country-side is slow in reaching me. The gentleman of whom you speak escaped from justice, did he?—Well, well! These disturbing times are ill for ladies who live in lonely granges. Pray Heaven he be not lurking about these premises of mine!'

'Reassure yourself, madam,' Colonel Willoughby said. 'In that case, I doubt not, we will presently find him.'

'You will examine more especially the cellars of the house, sir? Whiteoaks has very singular large cellars, in which many men might be hid; the thought whereof,' said Mistress Delia, shuddering, 'will cost me many a wakeful night.'

Colonel Willoughby repeated the cheer-

ing assurance that the fugitive, were he in or near the house of Whiteoaks, could by no means escape discovery and arrest.

'He broke away from Goodrest,' the Colonel said, 'but that was under cover of night, and the watch was ill-kept. The fellows were posted singly; whereby one was overpowered, and met his death. My measures, madam, are somewhat different. Not a mouse could slip out from this your house of Whiteoaks unobserved by my men; wherefore your mind may be at rest and easy.—Have you had any addition to your ordinary household, of late?'

The question was asked with an abrupt bluntness somewhat at variance with the Colonel's previous address; and Mistress Delia, not a little startled, answered with

more regard to expediency than truth.

'The young lady whom you now see has been my guest this sen'night past,' she said. 'My kind kinsman, Squire Hunter of Crowe Hall, spares one of his daughters to cheer my loneliness from time to time. Otherwise I have been alone, sir, and have seen little of my friends. When one is sick and sorry, one's acquaintance are apt to fall away.'

Colonel Willoughby was quick to note the reference to Squire Hunter of Crowe Hall, a gentleman known to be excellently well affected to the established government; and, as he bowed a second time to the lady at the spinet, he thought that the Squire was to be congratulated upon the possession of a very charming daughter.

He presently withdrew from the south parlour, to superintend the search through the house and grounds of Whiteoaks; and as he left the room, the supposed daughter of Squire Hunter began to touch the keys again, playing little careless snatches of one tune after another, softly at first, and then with more vigour. She was not nervous or alarmed, as poor Mistress Delia Pettigrew seemed to be. Doubtless she knew 'twas highly improbable that a Jacobite traitor should seek refuge in that house.

Colonel Willoughby could hear her begin to sing, as he and his men went upstairs; and her voice—one of no common beauty—was exquisitely true and steady. The Colonel was somewhat of a connoisseur in music; and, although he

had an important task to attend to, he could not help noticing and enjoying the perfection of this untaught melody.

Squire Hunter's daughter played and sang chiefly by ear—that was evident; and her ballad-music was simple; but the ear was very correct, and the quality of the voice like the notes of a nightingale for richness and sweetness.

'Pack, clouds, away, and welcome day,
With night we banish sorrow;
Sweet air blow soft, mount larks aloft,
To give my Love good-morrow!'

'Have you examined that deep chimney well, Hughes? Take the lantern, and thrust it as far up the aperture as you can.'

'Wings from the wind to please her mind,
Notes from the lark I'll borrow;

Bird prune thy wing, nightingale sing,
To give my Love good-morrow;
To give my Love good-morrow,
Notes from them both I'll borrow.'

'Be heedful, corporal; is not that a small door, yonder?—only a panel, do you say?—Try, then, whether it be moveable. Press hard; do not spare for forcible knocking.'

'Wake from thy nest, Robin-red-breast,
Sing birds in every furrow;
And from each hill, let music shrill
Give my fair Love good-morrow!'

'Look well among the rafters of this loft, my men; a velvet coat and lace ruffles have taken refuge amid dust and cobwebs ere now.—What, no sign of him we seek? Our search has been thorough, I think.'

'Blackbird and thrush in every bush,
Stare, linnet, and cock-sparrow!

You pretty elves, amongst yourselves
Sing my fair Love good-morrow !
To give my Love good-morrow,
Sing birds in every furrow !'

The voice went pealing on, joyous and sweet; evidently Squire Hunter's daughter wished to beguile her kinswoman from nervous thoughts which the presence of an armed sentry at the parlour-door, and a search-party within and without the house, might not unnaturally induce . . . . Yet the time seemed very long ere Colonel Willoughby returned to the south parlour with a shade of disappointment on his brow.

He looked round the room with the searching glance of one quick to detect any deception; but the parlour seemed to present no means of concealment whatever.

The walls were painted with wreaths of flowers and fruit; the hangings were extremely scanty; and no half-shadowed door or dubious recess rewarded the Colonel's scrutiny.

He stood upon the hearthrug a full minute, watchfully regarding the quiet scene; turning his eyes from the plain middle-aged lady in her towering cap, who was full of trepidation and excitement, to the graceful girl at the spinet, who was perfectly composed and tranquil. She had ceased to play as he entered the room; but her fingers still hovered lightly over the keys of the instrument.

Colonel Willoughby presently approached her, saying very courteously,

'You make sweet music, madam.'

She answered him with bright readiness, yet with a touch of stateliness which sat well upon her.

The grey Colonel was much captivated; assuredly, Squire Hunter of Crowe Hall had a very charming daughter!

He asked some question concerning a song, the echoes of which had reached him, he said, like fairy-music. And Beatrice sang the song again, with its warbling accompaniment of bird-notes, its exquisite ripple of careless gladness.—She sang, concentrating the attention of the officer upon herself by a strong exertion of her will and her youthful charm; and the Colonel stood at a few paces from her side, while only the graceful abundant folds of her flowing sacque concealed the form of the man on

whose head there was a price.—She sang; and her voice did not tremble or fail—But that joyous music was the last which ever crossed the lips of Mistress Beatrice Cope.

The Colonel thanked her when the song was ended. He had never, he said, heard the spirit of a ballad so perfectly given; Mistress Hunter had the art of gathering a whole choir of birds to make gay melody around her.

With this pretty speech he took his leave, assuring Madam Pettigrew that the mischievous traitor whom he sought was certain of speedy arrest wherever he might have taken refuge.

'For he is a well-known man,' the Colonel said. 'He was some time in Lon-

don, under the name of Lester Blundell; at which period he did infinite harm in detaching men from their allegiance to the Protestant succession. He cannot long escape capture, wherever he may lurk.'

Even Mistress Delia's tongue was then unequal to perform its office. She could but offer the Colonel hospitality for himself and his men; which he as briefly declined, saying that his orders demanded speedy execution. He made his compliments to the ladies, and withdrew.

Almost immediately they heard a bugle-call—a mustering of the troop before the door—and then the swift long trot of the cavalry horses, as Colonel Willoughby and his men rode away upon their fruitless quest.

And Mistress Beatrice Cope sat still before the spinet which had done such matchless service. Her colour had faded from cheek and lips; and she sat like a marble image of S. Cecilia, beautiful and pale. Her hands rested upon the keys; she seemed as one spell-bound.

When her brother rose from his concealment, and put his arms about her, she shivered exceedingly; but no words came from the still-parted lips whence the blithe song had lately floated.

CHAPTER XIII.

COLONEL WILLOUGHBY rode away from Whiteoaks sorely mortified and disappointed.

At this time contradictory rumours were constantly afloat; and just then men confidently believed 'The Chevalier' to be already in England. As a matter of fact, he was still in France; but the cavalry officers at Berwick had received what they esteemed trustworthy information to the

effect that he was roving from house to house among his Northumbrian adherents, waiting until the army under the command of the Earl of Mar should cross the Border and begin a march towards London. This seemed highly probable; and 'twas further asserted that James was identical with a certain young gentleman passing under the name of Lester Blundell, who appeared in London during the last year of Queen Anne's life, and was very busy among the Jacobite gentry, also enticing over to the Stuart interest many waverers whose wish for a Hanoverian sovereign was lukewarm.

Colonel Willoughby had set his mind upon being the fortunate means of bringing about this most important arrest. He

knew that the man whom he sought could not have put any great distance between himself and Goodrest as yet; but no clue could be gained from anyone as to the direction of the flight, which had been begun almost by night, and through a desolate country.

Jesse Ford was guiltless of calling attention towards Whiteoaks, although Charlie and Beatrice doubted him. He had 'kept a still tongue,' as he promised; but a vast deal of conjecture and cogitation went on in Jesse's brain when he saw the advent of the soldiers. He was much puzzled, too, when they went away without their prey. For Jesse knew quite well that 'the gentleman' was somewhere within that house of Whiteoaks.

The grey-browed Colonel, with his astute face and cold watchful eye, searched the country-side from end to end, hunting the Jacobite gentleman from Goodrest as one of old was hunted 'like a partridge on the mountains.' His men investigated the wildest recesses of that wild hill-country which lies between Goodrest and the Scottish Border; and they tried the faith of many a woodland ranger and moorland shepherd.

Charles Cope had very strange escapes; his good fortune, and the faithfulness of those among whom he passed, seemed even to himself almost incredible. The distance he had to traverse was short, but the dangers and hindrances with which it was beset were enormous.

After infinite fatigue and hardship he found himself in Scotland, with the money and papers, so important to the advancing army, safe and intact.—And then, just when the fugitive was in comparative safety, Jesse Ford began to think that he might as well make use of knowledge which could harm no one very grievously and might bring to its owner a certain reward.

A large sum of money had been offered for information likely to facilitate the arrest of the very gentleman whom Jesse had seen breakfasting in the south parlour at Whiteoaks; and Jesse, going to the market-town one day, heard the proclamation read from the Cross, and recognized the description of the person beyond a doubt.

Jesse did not suppose that the whole of

the Government reward would be given to one who should but declare the manner of this gentleman's escape; yet he thought that the officer in command at Berwick would probably be willing to pay well for the resolving of doubt as to the proceedings of a fugitive so important.

The affair at Whiteoaks being past and over, and the gentleman gone no one knew whither, it did not occur to Jesse's not very brilliant wits to imagine that anybody there would suffer materially by his disclosures. Government would scarce deal hardly with Madam Pettigrew for having acted upon an impulse of pity such as women are apt to feel. And as to Mistress Beatrice Cope, the young lady who visited Madam Pettigrew, and at whose

instance and entreaties the gentleman had been harboured, her case was certain to be gently considered.

Jesse Ford, therefore, prosecuted a few inquiries without more scruple of conscience than he found himself able easily to subdue. He was not very friendly with Joan and Patty, the two elder maidens of Madam Pettigrew's establishment; but he had had a little flirtation with Eliza, who was a village beauty to whom no man's homage came amiss.

Eliza had no idea of throwing herself and her attractions away upon Jesse Ford; yet when evenings were dull at Whiteoaks, and Madam Pettigrew's household rule prevented any possibility of livelier society, Eliza was glad to make an errand into the

farm-yard to feed the poultry, and chat a little with Jesse as he leant meditative upon the gate.

She did so a couple of evenings after the escape of Charles Cope; and Jesse opened the conversation by asking after the health of Madam Beatrice, who had not been about the fields and grounds the last day or two, he said.

Eliza was a kind-hearted girl, albeit a somewhat giddy one; and she seemed much concerned about the young lady. She lowered her own tones to a whisper as she told Jesse Ford that Mistress Beatrice had lost her voice—clean and entirely lost it: and such a beautiful voice as she had, to be sure! Just to hear her sing about the house, when she first came to White-

oaks!—a person could scarce believe any sound could be so sweet. And now she looked like a ghost; and 'twas all she could do to speak two words, in a strained whisper. When she moved her lips, there was no sound.

'Why, that's come on very sudden,' said Jesse, slowly. 'She were singing like a bird the arternoon the soldiers was here.'

'She haven't spoke a word since, but in a whisper,' said Eliza. 'And Madam have given her black-currant tea to drink; and Patty have rubbed her throat till the white skin is red and raw; and Joan have made her a plaster of stinging nettles for to keep up the irritation. And they give her cream fresh from the dairy; and a raw egg

now and again—though to be sure poor Madam Beatrice can't abide they raw eggs. But 'tis all no manner o' use. Her voice is gone: I doubt it'll ne'er come back.'

'She must ha' had a terrible fright wi' the soldiers coming arter the young gentleman as were here,' said Jesse.

'What dost know about the young gentleman, then?' Eliza asked, sharply. 'There weren't no young gentleman here; only Joan's bachelor, as foundered his horse a-crossing——'

'Joan's bachelor,' said Jesse, in his slow way, ''ud scarce be having breakfast i'the parlour, along with Madam and the young mistress, I'm thinking.—I saw the gentleman, Eliza, my lass; I know'd all as were going on: and I could ha' done a sight o'

harm if I'd a been that ways minded. But Jesse Ford weren't never one to make mischief with his tongue.'

Eliza, with many exclamations of dismay, dropped the crusts she held in her apron; and the poultry flew upon the spoil, pecking and clucking, and making as much noise as Eliza herself.

'Now, where's the sense o' raising such a din?' said Jesse. 'I tell 'ee I weren't one to make mischief; though there's them as might ha' trusted me more. I know'd that the young gentleman were here a night and a day; and I know'd that Madam Beatrice were out the night afore, and that Grizzel, poor beastie, were hard-travelled. But I said nought to the officer; no, not I.—One o' the troop spoke to I,

though. He said they were seeking one as is a very fireband i' the land; and there was a grit reward to win, he said. But I kept a still tongue in my head.'

'Blessings on 'ee, Jesse, for that same!' said poor Eliza, beginning to sob. 'Oh, such a day as we had! I'll ne'er forget it, if I live to be as old as Granny Hackett down to Whitecross.'

'And who was the gentleman with his neck in peril?' asked Jesse.

'Well, Patty did say he were Madam Beatrice's brother, as she'd scarce seen ever afore,' whispered Eliza, wiping her eyes; 'but I dunnot think so, myself. I think he were her true love, Jesse, else she'd never have dared so much for him.—And yet 'tis odd, too; he bain't nigh upon so

personable a man as Sir Raymond Forrest. But there! looks isn't everything,' said Eliza, resuming her little tone of rustic coquetry; 'and the gentleman has a beguiling tongue. I could ha' done a'most anything for him, myself, after he once spoke to me so smiling and pleasant, and him in peril o' his life every minute!'

And Eliza glanced mischievously at Jesse, to see how he liked this remark. But Jesse's attention was engrossed, and he did not respond to the challenge thus conveyed.

'What did she dare for him?' he said.

'And that,' said Eliza, somewhat tartly, 'is just what I have no mind to tell you, Jesse. There's other folk can keep a still tongue, as well as yourself, I'm thinking.'

Jesse saw that he must go to work in a different way. He devoted his energies to courtship rather than cross-examination; and Eliza, as soon as she imagined her fascinations to be the prominent object in his mind, was easily thrown off her guard.

When he by degrees worked round to Madam Beatrice and the young gentleman once more, Eliza was disposed to be more communicative and less cautious.

'What did she dare for him?' Eliza repeated, when Jesse's blandishments had brought her gradually back to the point. 'Is that what you want to know, Jesse?—Why, she rode through the dark night to warn him to flee from Goodrest; and if you call *that* a trifle for a woman to do, you've a queer turn o' mind, that's all I

can say. Through they lonesome lanes, and past the fields where the Good People dance;—many a time I've seen the rings upon the grass down by the river.'

'I know she warned him,' said Jesse. 'I reckon she did more nor that, arterwards. She must ha' thought upon some cunning hiding-place, when the soldiers came. For he was here then; there's no manner o' doubt o' that.'

'Eh, but Madam Beatrice is clever and brave!' Eliza exclaimed, divided between the desire to electrify Jesse with a startling story, and some lingering remnants of prudence which made her feel that she had better keep silence on the subject. 'Jesse! If I tell 'ee what she did, thee'lt say naught *of* it?'

'Nay, nay,' said Jesse. 'What for should I? And besides 'tis all past and done now.—But I should like fine to know how Madam Beatrice managed,' he said, reflectively. 'I couldn't ha' believed there was a mousehole i' the house or near it, that they redcoats didn't glower into.'

'And no more there wasn't,' she said. 'They crope, and they crawled, and they clomb—eh, dear! they was hot and dusty ere they'd done; and the Colonel—him with the loud voice—a-cheering of 'em on to force theirselves into every corner, and take their chance o' getting out again. One of 'em, a stout fellow wi' a mighty red face, stuck fast i' the chimbley of the old justice-room, as is never used now-a-days. The Colonel hounded him up; he

said as how there might be a secret chamber, aside from the smoke-drift. And the poor fellow clambered as high as he could, and then stuck where the chimbley narrowed; and they dragged him down by his boots, which was all you could see of him, waggling about as he struggled and fought. He were a'most smothered with the soot and the pother; but the Colonel thought nowt on't.—And all the while the young gentleman were quiet i' the south parlour, with Madam and Mistress Beatrice!'

'Ha!' quoth Jesse, much interested.

'Aye; in the south parlour. Madam Beatrice sat at the spinet—do 'ee know how the spinet stands?'

Jesse nodded.

'In the corner, betwixt Mistress Beatrice and the wall, the gentleman were hid. She threw the train o' her gown over him: oh, Patty says 'twas pretty to hear her begging him to crouch down there and be still! And she made Patty help to arrange the folds, because Madam were all in a tremble. So Patty set the dress as natural as could be; and what with the train, and the carving of the spinet, and the darkness of the corner by the wall, nought could be seen of the gentleman, unless Mistress Beatrice moved . . . And she was beautiful to see, Patty says, sitting there for all the world as blithe as if she never knew a care. She was singing when the soldiers rode up to the door; and she sang again while they

searched the house, for she thought no one would believe she had any hand in hiding him whom they sought, while she had heart and voice to sing so true and steady.—But when the Colonel came near the spinet arterwards she must have been frighted terrible. Yet Madam says she were just herself even then, and smiled, and answered him so as he should suspect nothing. And when he paid her compliments upon the song he had heard in the distance, she sang it for him as he stood there in the south parlour . . . Oh, 'twas awesome to hear her, singing so joyously, while her poor heart must have been fit to break with the fear and the dread!—And the poor gentleman, all the while,

close at her feet beneath the primrose silk of her sacque!—And that is how she lost her voice, Jesse Ford. For when the search-party went away, and all the peril was over, her beautiful voice that was so sweet and so gay, was gone too; and a weak little whisper has been all the sound she can utter ever since. 'Twas her voice for his life, I reckon.—And doubtless she was willing to pay the price.'

'Aye, aye,' said Jesse Ford, slowly nodding his head. ''Twas well and bravely done, Eliza, my woman.—And being done as 'tis, and all successfully ended, it matters not who knows how Madam Beatrice saved the young gentleman's life.—Eliza! Do 'ee mind the cottage wi' the apricock-tree

trained o'er its walls, down by Whitecross Mill?'

'Aye,' said Eliza.

'I do mean to rent that 'ere cottage, or maybe to buy it out of hand, come Christmas,' said Jesse. 'And I shall plant and sow the garden-grund, and keep pigs, and fowls, and happen a cow likewise.'

'Have 'ee saved enough for that, then?' asked the village beauty, twisting her fingers in her apron, and contemplating Jesse from quite a new point of view.

She was not sure that she should choose to marry him; but it now appeared that he was 'eligible,' according to the Whitecross standard of opinion, if at any time she did so choose.

'I've a-saved more nor you think for,'

said Jesse. 'But you've know'd me ever for a careful man, haven't 'ee?—And 'tis wonderful what a careful man can scrape together, so 'tis.'

CHAPTER XIV.

AT this moment Patty looked out from the back door to summon Eliza; and Jesse had no chance to enlarge further upon his own merits, and the substantial advantages which 'a careful man' could bestow upon his bride.

Eliza darted into the house; and Jesse Ford trudged away to the village with his mind made up. The next day, Madam Pet-

tigrew paid his wages; and Jesse availed himself of the opportunity to ask for a holiday. And very early in the morning, before the sun was up, he set off upon his road to Berwick.

Arrived at Berwick, Jesse inquired for Colonel Willoughby's quarters; but although these were easily found, the Colonel himself was absent.

A hint on Jesse's part that he had important tidings to communicate made the soldiers to whom he spoke very willing to present him to the officer commanding in the Colonel's absence; and Jesse soon found himself in a well-furnished room, awaiting the coming of this gentleman. There was wine upon the table, and also the remains of a late and substantial breakfast;

and the party who had partaken of this refreshment were now playing tennis hard by.

Jesse Ford heard the noise of the tennis balls, the loud voices, and the laughter, as he waited for the entrance of the officer who would receive his communication.

Presently a gentleman aged about seven-and-twenty, wearing a small peruke of a warm brown colour, and very exquisite fine lace at his cravat, entered the room. He had not been playing in the match at tennis, but merely looking on, and sharing in the merriment. A pleasant smile still hovered upon his lips; the flavour of some merry jest still lingered in his brain.

Jesse Ford thought that he had seen

that countenance before; but he was somewhat confused by the novelty of his circumstances, and could not be sure.

'I come, your honour,' he said, making his best bow, and speaking in the slow, sententious way natural to him, 'along of that there exclamation.'

'Oh!—ah!—yes, to be sure; the proclamation,' said the young officer. 'Well, my man, out with your news; open your budget. Tell us where this troubler of the peace at present lurks: and your fortune will be made, you know.'

He spoke these words as in duty bound; but he looked with scant favour upon the man to whom they were addressed, wishing very earnestly that Colonel Willoughby were in Berwick that day.

'Tis beyond my power to say where he do lurk, your honour,' said Jesse Ford, in reply to the question put; 'seeing that I knows naught of the gentleman since he made good his escape. But I thought maybe the Colonel 'ud like to know how he were hid at Whiteoaks——'

'At Whiteoaks?—This man to whom the proclamation refers escaped from Goodrest, or was cunningly hidden there,' the young officer said, speaking sharply and decidedly.

'Aye, sir; but he went from Goodrest to Whiteoaks, Madam Pettigrew's place; and he were hid i' the house a night and a day,' Jesse answered. 'I can tell 'ee how 'twas managed, from first to last.'

'Do so, then, at your best pace,' said the other, impatiently.

'But about the reward, your honour?'

'Oh, as to that, you will have what your information earns; it may be worth nothing,' Sir Raymond Forrest replied, with a contemptuous bitterness past concealment.

When the proclamation was issued by the Government under which he served, he had not in his own mind associated it with the brother of Mistress Beatrice Cope; since the hero of the Goodrest escape was imagined to be no private gentleman, but one upon whose safety the whole fortunes of the Jacobite party hinged. And now 'twas a strange turn of Fate which made Sir Raymond the recipi-

ent of information which touched him nearly; and in his first agitation he could not disguise the disgust and repulsion with which he regarded the bearer of it.

In a moment, however, he perceived that Jesse would not speak without more encouragement than he had given; and he also realized the importance of hearing the account, and satisfying the man's avarice. Else who could say into whose ear Jesse Ford might pour a story in which the name of Mistress Beatrice Cope must perforce be mentioned?

'I do not suppose that your information can be worth much, my man,' he said, 'since it touches not upon the present whereabouts of this proscribed person. But I wish to hear the tale, and I will

reward you well for the recital.—You say, then, that the fugitive was within the four walls of Whiteoaks when Colonel Willoughby and his men called there?'

Jesse Ford told his story much as Eliza had told it to him, proceeding with more confidence as he noticed that his auditor was greatly interested. To judge by the interest aroused, the guineas produced should be many, Jesse thought.

When he came to describe the manner in which Colonel Willoughby's search had been baffled, the young officer whom he addressed rose from his seat hastily, and began to pace the room from end to end.

'Go on,' he said, whenever Jesse paused in his recital; and the man knew that he listened with breathless attention, although

his footsteps never ceased until the tale was done. Then he stood by one of the windows, saying, still with averted face,

'Under what name did this gentleman pass at Whiteoaks?'

'No one knows the young gentleman's name, your honour,' said Jesse. 'He passed i' the house as the brother of Madam Beatrice Cope; but 'twas believed among the women that he were her true-love, as do seem more likely. And I be o' that way o' thinking, myself. In fact,' said Jesse, with an air of profound consideration, 'I haven't no manner o' dubitation on the point.'

Sir Raymond Forrest seated himself at a side-table, drawing towards him a heavy standish of ink, as though he intended to *take* minutes of what had been said. But

in an instant he started up, looking wondrous dark and pale.

'Go, sir,' he said, frowning upon the dismayed serving-man with a heavy brow before which Jesse cowered. 'You have wrought harm enough this day. Return whence you came, and think and speak no more of these matters, lest worse befall you. Know you the penalty for misprision of treason?'

Jesse's jaw fell, and his eyes opened wide. The words he heard sounded ominous; he began to think that he had best have 'kept a still tongue.'

'You say you knew that this unfortunate gentleman was harboured at Whiteoaks, although you knew not the manner of the concealment until after his escape,'

Sir Raymond pursued, cold, calm, and relentless. 'Now your present position, my good lad, appears to me extremely awkward and perilous. 'Tis well that you laid this information before me, since I am by no means inclined to earn credit for zeal in His Majesty's service by harassing two ladies, who doubtless,' (here he cleared his voice, speaking with some slight difficulty) 'doubtless, I say, acted from motives which do them honour. But, were you to breathe a word of this to any other officer, you would expose yourself and them to the penalties of the law. Therefore, you will do wisely to speak no more of what chanced at Whiteoaks, until your dying day; else may you chance to make acquaintance with the inside of Newcastle Jail.'

'Eh, sir, I bain't one to make mischief,' said Jesse, much crestfallen and dispirited. 'But hearing o' that grit reward as were offered, it seemed a pity, sir, that so much good money should be wasted-like. If I'd a thought as Madam Pettigrew, and the young lady, and I myself to boot o' that, 'ud run a chance o' Newcastle Jail, wild horses shouldn't ha' dragged a word o' this story from Jesse Ford's tongue. I bain't like they women-folk, allays a-clattering whether or no; I can keep a still tongue when I do please.'

'Let me recommend you so to please, in future,' Sir Raymond Forrest said, very curtly; and then he pushed sundry gold pieces across the table towards Jesse, without looking at him.

'Take your reward,' he said. 'I pay you, not for information which may be used, but for a tale I chose to hear. And now, begone. Remember what I have said.'

Jesse, bewildered and terrified, gathered up the money and went, trembling lest each soldier whom he passed should question or arrest him.

He was no sooner out of Berwick, than he took to his heels and ran. Those few guineas which he carried home were the hardest earned of any he had ever possessed; for he purchased them with peace of mind, as well as bodily exercise. The words 'misprision of treason' and 'Newcastle Jail' had a very ugly sound in Jesse Ford's ears.

Sir Raymond Forrest, meanwhile, sat alone in his quarters in much bitterness of soul. He felt no scruple as to keeping his own counsel concerning the proceedings of the ladies at Whiteoaks; but he could not avoid dwelling upon the thought that this gentleman whom they sheltered was firmly believed to be identical with 'The Pretender.' True, a mistake on this point was possible; yet probabilities were strongly in favour of the surmise. It seemed unlikely that the Chevalier should remain in France so long after the enterprise of his adherents had been begun; and yet 'twas absolutely certain that he was not with them in Scotland.

A horrible doubt entered into the mind of Sir Raymond Forrest. Beatrice, he re-

membered, had not absolutely said that her brother lived; she had but left her lover to draw that inference from her words, when they spoke together at White-oaks . . . .

A species of madness held possession of Sir Raymond, as he thought upon this; he scarce knew what he imagined or believed. He did not try to reason as to Beatrice's truth or falsehood; he only knew that if 'twas the Chevalier whom she shielded, and to whose service she had bound herself, then he himself was indeed a man undone—a man robbed, spoiled, and desolate.

'Twas a curious state of mind in which, without consciously judging her, he yet condemned her, unheard, untried; in which his spirit shuddered away from the recol-

lection of the sweet and gracious lady whom he loved, and from the contemplation of that part of her life in which he seemed to have no share.

But at sundown of that same day Sir Raymond's perplexed thoughts were turned into a different channel by the arrival of a messenger from Crowe Hall, who came bearing very evil tidings.

Mistress Beatrice Cope, it appeared, had returned home from Whiteoaks the day before, in a state which greatly alarmed 'young Madam' and the family. She was evidently in the last stage of exhaustion, and could scarce speak a word so as to be heard. And almost ever since she arrived, she had been asleep; lying in a

deep trance-like slumber from which 'twas well-nigh impossible to rouse her. And her pulse being very low and faint, they greatly feared that in this long sleep her life would ebb away.

Therefore Squire Hunter had despatched a messenger to Berwick, to notify to his nephew, Sir Raymond Forrest, the alarming illness of Mistress Beatrice Cope; and Sir Raymond Forrest, in his consternation, forgot the previous tenour of his thoughts, and did but consider that should Beatrice pass hence, all the gladness and rejoicing would pass with her, leaving this present world dark and desolate.

And he could not refrain from think-

ing upon her sweetness then, and upon the earnest fervour with which she had professed to him that he held her heart in truth and verity.

'Twas impossible to obtain release from duty until the return of his Colonel; and well-nigh four-and-twenty hours had been lost when Sir Raymond rode at last across the park of Crowe Hall.

As he slackened his horse's speed at the first rising ground whence a view of the house could be obtained, a mist gathered before his sight and the bright autumnal tints dazzled him. He could see nothing distinctly; yet he felt rather than saw that the house looked very white and blank in the crimson glow of

the setting sun. He rode into the court-yard, with a dull hopeless desolation weighing down his spirits; and asked no question of the man who took his horse. But the groom spoke, pointing up at the closed windows.

'Old Madam Hunter died this morning, your honour,' he said, in a low tone. 'She have been failing this sennight past; but 'twas sudden at the last. The Squire and young Madam are sore cast down.'

These words restored to Sir Raymond the use of his brain and of his tongue. His sight cleared; his voice, though husky and broken, was articulate and firm.

When Anne Hunter met him a moment

later, with tender pity in her sorrowful face, he could ask after *her*—after Mistress Beatrice Cope.

CHAPTER XV.

AND then, almost immediately, young Madam Hunter, pale and tearful from recent grief and present anxiety, took Sir Raymond into the fresh and pleasant chamber where Beatrice lay sleeping that strange sleep which nobody at Crowe Hall could understand.

Bessie Hunter sat by the bedside, holding one wan little hand in hers. The

face and lips of the sleeper were blanched almost to the whiteness of death; but the countenance wore the peaceful, even happy expression which comes from rest after labour and toil.

When Bessie relinquished the hand she held, and Raymond Forrest, falling on his knees, pressed his lips upon it, Mistress Beatrice Cope, for the first time during many hours, moved a little, and half-opened her eyes. Their quiet glance met his agonized appealing gaze; and she recognized him at once, making a great though momentary effort to rouse herself and speak.

'Raymond!' she whispered, a sweet and wistful smile of intense gladness lighting up her grey eyes and her colourless

face; 'he is safe—Oh, thank GOD!—my brother . . .!'

And with these words, audible only to him to whom they were addressed, she sank once more into that mysterious world of sleep, which is sometimes only the borderland across which wayfarers pass to the still more mysterious Kingdom of the Dead.

Her time was not yet come, however; many years of life, with its pains and pleasures, lay before Mistress Beatrice Cope. She recovered slowly from the illness in which her great exhaustion culminated; but she had no after-memory of that moment in which Sir Raymond Forrest knelt beside her bed, and her half-conscious lips spoke words which were to him as the

resolving of all doubt. She never knew that she had spoken of her brother.

The ill-fated rising of 1715 came to its sad conclusion very speedily.

Charles Cope fought with conspicuous gallantry upon the woeful field of Sheriffmuir; and was one of the last of the adherents of The Chevalier who quitted Great Britain when all was subsequently known to be lost. But he and his sister did not meet again, after that memorable day on which she saved his life in Madam Pettigrew's parlour at Whiteoaks.

Beatrice found means to send him a small miniature of herself, which had been very delicately executed by an artist in Newcastle a year before; and from this

miniature her brother had the picture painted which is now to be seen at Goodrest.

'Twas a fancy-portrait in part, without doubt, being painted in France, and chiefly from Mr. Cope's description of his sister; but the likeness was reckoned wonderfully true and accurate. And he had her maiden-name cut deep upon the frame; since to him she was ever 'Beatrice Cope.'

The portrait has its place in the Goodrest gallery, where it still stands, a memorial of a brave lady who had a loving and a constant heart.

And 'tis satisfactory to think that the stormy experiences of those sad and dangerous days did not make lasting shipwreck

of the fortunes of one so true and faithful. 'Tis said, indeed, that Dame Alicia Forrest was never over-well reconciled to the marriage which she disliked, and which she had done all in her power to break off: but she dwelt chiefly with her daughter Ermine, who had married much to her satisfaction; and was little at Drumscour after the wedding betwixt her son and Mistress Beatrice Cope took place.

And Beatrice Forrest was a very happy wife; although the beautiful voice which had been her maiden-dower returned no more in its fulness and melody, and her eyes had at times the strained yet wistful expression which lingers in those of a woman who has resolutely forced herself to a terrible endurance.

Three faces faded out of her life never to return. The brother to whom her heart was strongly drawn—the gentle devout woman to whom her early friendship was given—the elder friend whose claim upon her took root in her childish memories and in her father's grave—all these crossed the seas, and breathed English air no more.

And Mistress Beatrice Cope was not among the number of those who forget. But she was singularly free from personal troubles of her own, being greatly blessed in her domestic lot, and much beloved by those who came in contact with her. The affection with which the Hunters of Crowe Hall regarded her knew neither check nor chill; while Mistress Delia Petti-

grew took her young cousin to her heart in a remarkable way, after that memorable exploit at Whiteoaks in the autumn of 1715.

Mistress Delia was very proud of the feat then performed, and of her own share in it; and was disposed, when she grew older and more garrulous, to talk rather more of these matters than was altogether discreet.

And by degrees Mistress Delia well-nigh forgot Beatrice's part in the device whereby Charles Cope's life and liberty were preserved; so that she ended by believing the triumph over Colonel Willoughby and his troop to be entirely due to her own readiness and presence of mind.

When Beatrice had been married at

least three years, and the recollection of the disturbances of 'the Fifteen' was becoming somewhat less fresh and vivid in the north, a message was brought to her from foreign parts.

The bearer was an old Northumbrian yeoman, well known to have been present at the surrender of Preston, after sharing all other disasters of that most disastrous rising. He returned at length to his native place, trusting in his own obscurity for protection from penalty; and one day he waylaid young Lady Forrest, as she strolled slowly down the avenue at Drumscour, enjoying the warm summer sunshine with her baby son in her arms.

'I bear word to you, madam,' this old man said, 'from one who knows you well.

I was bidden to name no names, but to say 'tis the gentleman you once spoke with beside the gate of Whiteoaks who now sends you greeting. And I was to say to you that you spoke truth then: that the cause you wot of is over-noble for service such as was asked of you that day . . . . The gentleman said you would understand, madam; and he prayed very fervently that the blessing of Heaven might rest upon you, for he said you have a loyal soul.'

THE END.

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